

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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BY·CLARK  
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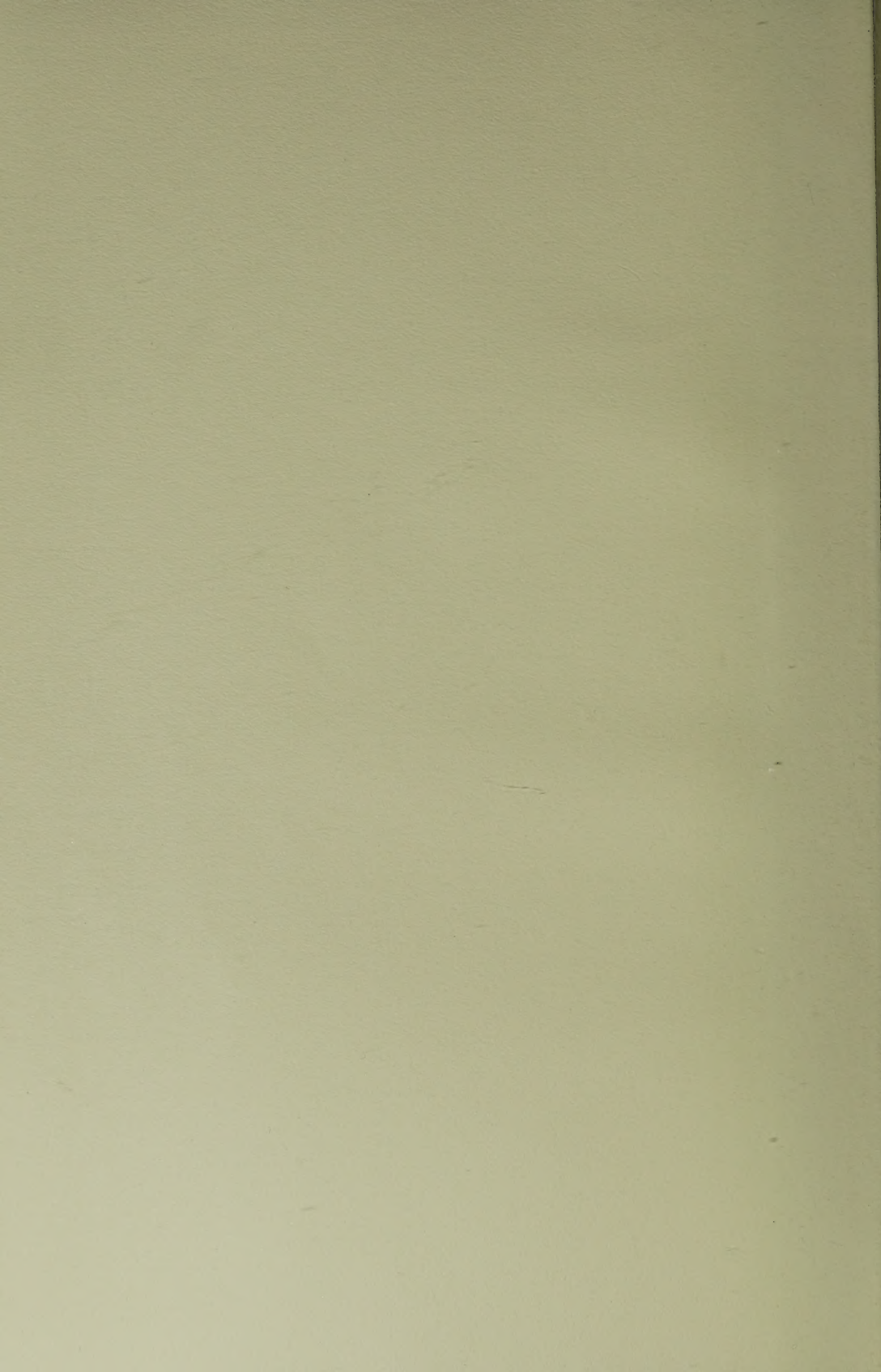
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*A Universal Man*



SINEL



# Abraham Lincoln

## A Universal Man

BY

CLARK PRESCOTT BISSETT

PROFESSOR OF LAW

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



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TO MY WIFE,

EDITH D. BISSETT

FRIEND, COUNSELLOR, GUIDE,  
FOR MORE THAN A QUARTER  
CENTURY MY DAILY COMPANION  
AND NEVER FAILING INSPIRATION.  
LIKE THE BLESSING OF THE  
LORD—MAKING ME RICH AND  
ADDING NO SORROW THEREWITH.

C. P. B.

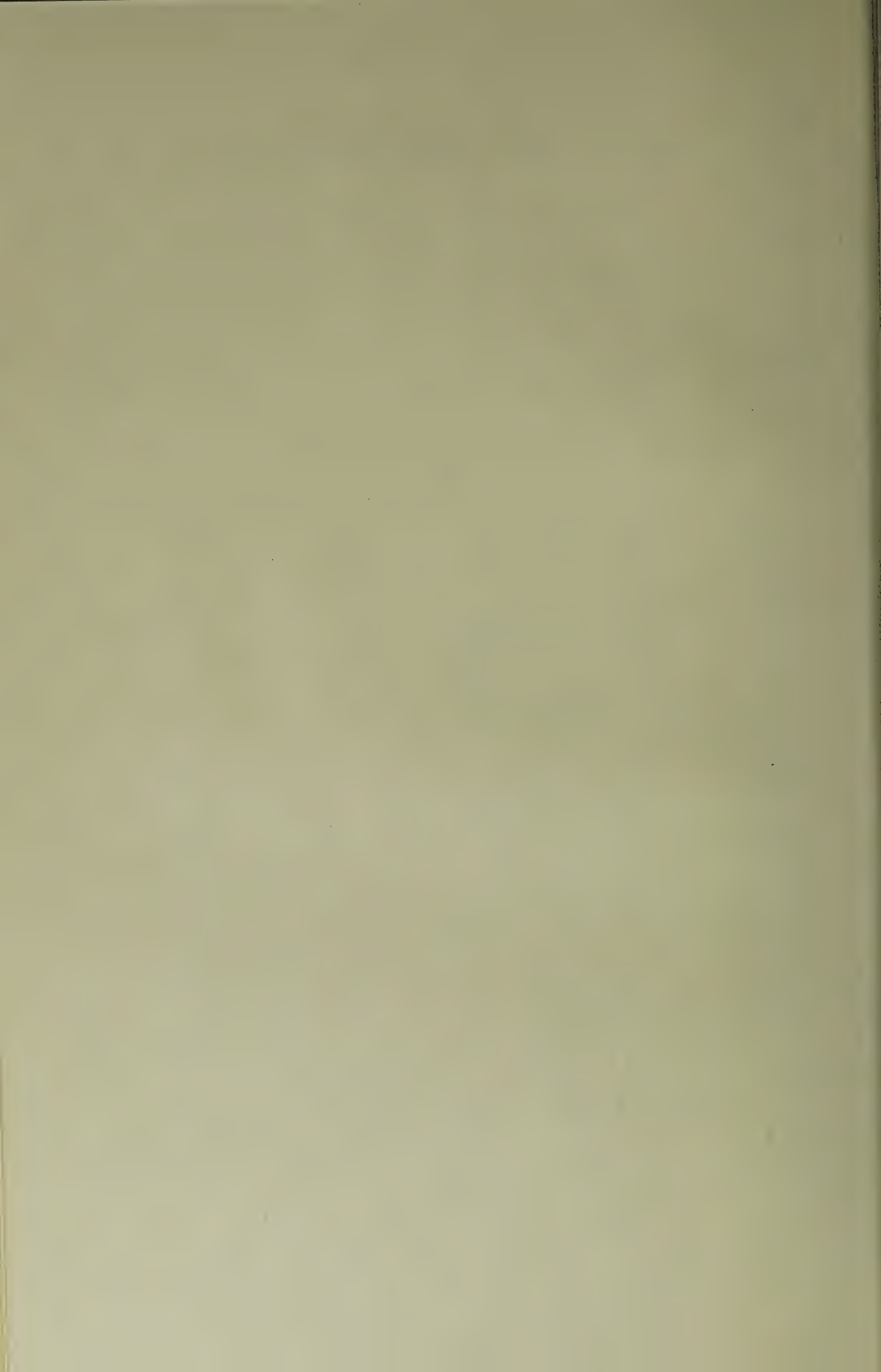




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## INTRODUCTION

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**U**NDoubtedly an apology is necessary for adding another page to the overwhelming mass of books and pamphlets devoted to the genius of Abraham Lincoln. My reason is a purely personal one. For more than a quarter of a century I have been a collector of Lincolniana, and the life of Abraham Lincoln has become consciously and unconsciously a part of me. I have ever felt a deep reverence for this great soul, and I venture to hope that I may communicate this reverence to some of my fellow citizens, especially to my children.

It seems fitting to call attention once more to the genius of Abraham Lincoln, who, more than four score years after the Declaration of Independence, was the one man who held a brief for the full interpretation of that proclamation for freedom to humanity, and who after a lifetime of devotion to the principles enunciated in that sacred document was able in his Cooper Institute Speech to convince his country that if universal freedom were to be won for all people, it must be won through the preservation of the Constitution of the United States.

However far the performance may have fallen below my desires the task has been purely a labor of love. No man can speak for another; the best that any man can do is to give expression to himself. Yet it is my hope that this little book may result in a closer sympathy and a clearer understanding of the great



*principles for which Lincoln lived, and for which he died. I shall be most happy if I have done even a little to make plain the devotion of Abraham Lincoln to the principles of constitutional and representative government.*

*The one central attribute of Abraham Lincoln, the very sun, as it were, of his being, was Justice. All other attributes circled around it and were governed by it. You may call it Justice or you may call it Love. It matters not, for there is little difference in the quality or quantity of the two words. A man who is primarily actuated by justice will do precisely the same things under the same circumstances as one who is actuated by love. Those outstanding leaders of men who have most fully reflected these distinctive attributes of Deity give abundant proof that this is true.*

*Lincoln the boy was just as Lincoln the man. He required no precedent on which to found his reasoning. He was as ready as Solomon to give his decision on any vital point and his verdicts are as simple and uncontrovertible. Born and reared on the borderland between states that were divided on a question which had reached no decisive solution through all the ages, he never even debated it in his own mind.*

*An inharmonious intellect was as much at war with itself, in his high temple of thought, as an inharmonious state, or country, or kingdom. He saw in the Union under the Declaration of Independence, the Union of the individual—the harmonious man, capable of self government, subject to no man's dictation, as far as the life, and the freedom to live that life, in the world of justice could be carried. A union of states meant the union of the individual, and neither was open to secession. In the realm of the mind, he acknowledged no allegiance to any power on earth. His Creator was his sole and only King. The union of the states was a symbol to him of the union with God.*

*Study him as you may, through his own words, through*

*records of his intimate friends, or through his acts, and you will find no other Lincoln than this. If the times in which he lived brought to light this attribute of justice in all its pure radiance, that does not argue that the times were the cause of it. The Union had hundreds of men of far greater educational advantages, far superior culture, far broader experience, and of no less human sympathies—Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, Stephen A. Douglas, his great rival, Salmon P. Chase, Edwin A. Stanton, and the great Prime Minister, William H. Seward; but none of these had lighted in his soul the lamp of justice. Not one of them could bring himself to love his personal enemy, much less the enemies of his theory of government. Lincoln proved himself to be so compounded of Love and Justice that he never judged any man. He may have punished because he himself obeyed the law of justice, but he did not cease to love.*

*We talk of democracy, but the world has known few democrats—perhaps not more than two. To see every human being as an equal is impossible to any merely academic intelligence. The eyes that look upon men, as the rain falls alike on the just and on the unjust are not subject to the light of libraries. They shine with the light of heaven. No mortal reason can bring a man to this sublime philosophy. Such a state of mind is foolishness to culture. Even religious enthusiasm falls short of this God-like contemplation of the things of this world. But Abraham Lincoln so saw, so felt, so understood. Black or White, bond or free, friend or enemy, he saw them all in love—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," speaks out boldly in his every utterance, beams out benignly from his every act.*

*The books that have been written in an endeavor adequately to express this man Lincoln, now make a large library; but not one of them, written as they are out of the best heart's love, compares with the man Lincoln, or begins to shine with his illimitable*

*personality. Records of him are material. He himself was a living flame, burning grandly but steadily, making plain the smallest fibre of any fact to which its rays were directed. Such a man is beyond description. The noblest and most capable minds reach only the borderlands of his clear thought. What matter if his boots were unblackened, or his coat ill-fitting? There was not a stain upon his heart, nor a wrinkle in his soul. His simplest sentence is a thunderbolt; his fiercest anathema a blessing. He walks the land today, a spirit of colossal proportions by which men, measured by their words and acts, are the merest pigmies.*

*Lincoln's greatest general never lost a battle, but his generalship lasted only four years, and was confined to the government and science of war. Lincoln's work began with the cradle and will endure through eternity; his battles were in the highest clouds of human reason, and he too never lost a battle. His foot never took a backward step. His judgment never failed. Neither did his love pale nor his justice repent.*

*Look upon that pictured face hanging upon your study wall. Do you not feel a new warm glow in your heart? Do not the mixed reasons in your brain fall into sweet concord? Does not humanity show itself in gentler aspect? Do not personal ambitions fade? Do not animosities die away? And is there not somehow born in your whole being a consciousness of harmony and sweet security for the eventual salvation of the peoples of the earth? No other man who ever trod the earth stands as close to the heart of the world as Abraham Lincoln, save He who voiced for all mankind the teaching that was nearest to being exemplified among mortals by this cabin-born son of American pioneers, whose going out from this life wrought not only a Union of the States, but, for that hour of mourning at least, the Union of all the peoples of the earth.*

*We need Lincoln Philosophy and Lincoln Spirit today. The*



*task of making men free was not completed with the abolition of the slavery of the black man. Vast numbers of the human family are yet in bondage. Everywhere there is a tendency to eat the bread earned by the sweat of others. Everywhere there is a lack of the broad spirit of human love and brotherhood, which is the Lincoln gospel. Loyalty to the Constitution—loyalty to the Union—loyalty to our fellowmen—these he would teach us. No man can know Lincoln too well, and no man can know him at all without becoming better for the knowledge. These are in part my reasons for writing this book, but above all I have desired to express my supreme admiration and reverence for Abraham Lincoln, before whom I stand with bowed head. Afar off I have followed him from my earliest childhood, and here, when past middle life, I approach him more intimately, feeling sure that if he were present he would understand and sympathize with me in my desire, bold though it be, to make the world a little better acquainted with him, and thereby give to the world new hope, new aspirations, and a new sense of the brotherhood of man. I tender to you, my readers, in all humility, this book, written out of the love of my heart for that supreme genius—Abraham Lincoln.*

CLARK PRESCOTT BISSETT.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*A Universal Man*





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## *Chapter I*

# BIRTH

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IT IS early evening in the latter part of October, 1808, four months before Abraham Lincoln, the son of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, is to be born. The moon is at its full and through the open cabin door, for it is Indian Summer and the air is balmy, a flood of soft light falls across the puncheon floor and touches the prospective mother as she moves about the cabin, preparing the simple evening meal. Outside in a sycamore tree a mocking bird pours forth a flood of melody. A cricket chirps under the drying boughs in the fireplace. A horned owl punctuates the stillness with its solemn "too-who." The rugged pioneer, ax on shoulder, emerges from the forest, returning to his evening meal of coarse bread of corn meal and venison. The rough pine table holds a few cracked dishes, a jug of maple syrup, and the tin cups from which to drink the parched corn coffee, or, if fortune has been favorable, a limited draught of weak tea. Luxuries, there are none. The cloth that covers the table is of some coarse fibre of home weaving, colored to disguise the stains with which constant use and wear have marred it. Rough, home-made chairs or stools are drawn up at the board. Distant neighbors drop in to exchange news, stumps supplying the extra seats at the table.

There is a picture of George Washington hanging on the

sages of stability, and the great sun by day following his steady course, there where the voices of the storm proclaimed the power of the Spirit, and the soft breath of Spring whispered of His enduring love;—is it not likely, I say, that in those long mystical evenings, pregnant with hallowed memories and vibrant with the suppressed emotions of a nation of thirty million souls slowly but surely approaching a tremendous crisis in which the bravest sons of all those states should struggle passionately to the death in war;—is it not likely that she should pray that this child might be a son, and that he might be the Moses destined to lead another race out of bondage?

You have the result of those meditations in the life and actions and work of her son. Unless we are willing to stand by the law of chance and trust our present and future to the casting of the dice by blind fate, we must accept this argument to account for Abraham Lincoln.

And then one night in February while the strong winds, big with the events of a new spring, wrestled about the little cabin in the deep woods, the child was born.

What an hour was that for the world! How far on another course might the Ship of State have been blown, and where might it be drifting today, had that soul in its rugged little body, not come into our world!

If we were to attribute intelligent power to the planets after the manner of the ancients, we should have to agree that at the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the planet Mars and the planet Venus were both in the ascendant, for never has a spirit come to this earth in which the powers of war and the powers of love were so entwined. But we need not seek beyond the natural divinity of the mother and the rugged and primal nobility of the father and his forebears to cast the



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horoscope of this great world figure. The very time of his conception was pregnant with the child of freedom. The newest nation of the earth, itself a child of liberty, born in pain and travail, fought for while yet a helpless babe in the cradle of liberty, was now in the vigorous strength of youth; and while the bloom of adolescence was still hardly more than seen upon its cheeks, was a nation divided against itself. Out of that division and remating was to be born another child of Democracy—the Union.

This tremendous event had its inception about the cradle hewn out of the maple log, in the still, sheltering forest where, more than anywhere else, God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.

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## *Chapter II*

# CHILDHOOD

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**A**BRAHAM LINCOLN was born February 12, 1809, in a desolate region, three miles from Hodgenville, Kentucky, a place that today would not be given the name of even a settlement, so crude was it in every way, so much it lacked of everything that goes to make for civilization. No, not everything, for there, as in every frontier settlement, or cabin of American pioneers, was the courage, the will, the fearless determination, and the primal virtues of mind and heart that are the warp and woof of all society, and especially of the society of that period of America.

A strange thing is this coming of a new human being into the world! It would seem that the cradle of a child born for great deeds must be the center of unnumbered forces flowing to it from all the stars of the universe. We believe that all the planets and their stars are connected by invisible lines with all other planets, and that over those invisible rays, vibrant with thrilling action travel waves of sound and those sounds in heavenly harmonies break upon the farthest shores of infinite space. It must certainly follow that a living soul has its subtle connections with other soul forces in the infinitude of God.

Lincoln, the baby, lying in his rude cradle, sucking his thumbs and gazing with a child's questioning eyes upon a

strange new world, was only one child in a million filling such a place in the evolution of life and its manifestations. Other children were born on that same day, the same hour, one or two at the same moment perhaps. But no child whose history we know had such a heritage of thoughts and feelings, weighted with generations of passion for justice tempered by religious devotion, active and silent, Covenanter, Cavalier and Quaker, as this child, Abraham Lincoln. Not only had his ancestral life been filled with thoughts of universal democracy and active suffering for the principle of it, but the immediate atmosphere wherein he was conceived and brought into the world was colored as the rainbow with the breeding ideas of two great factions at bitter strife, each intent on forcing its particular set of ideas of government on the other, or of going each its separate way in search of those things which each held sacred and necessary to the growth and ultimate happiness of man. And these thought forces were sending out wave upon wave into the surrounding ocean of human perception and understanding.

The soul of that tender boy in the father-made cradle, rocked by the foot of a mother who had become imbued with the idea, from association with the Lincoln philosophy, that such labor as made that cradle and built the cabin over her head, and was clearing the primeval forest to make land from which that labor might win independence and untrammelled action for the individual man, was honorable and the soul of that boy was no doubt tuned to receive the thoughts of liberty and to deny the thoughts of bondage.

Sitting with those humble people in that dimly lighted cabin, did no sensitive soul feel the sacred spell of prophetic greatness hovering near? Did no gnarled hand of a primitive seer bending forward from a crude oaken chair rest upon the

cradle in which lay the sleeping child? Was there no faint whisper wafted to the grey-eyed mother of the great debt that future ages were to bear toward this new comer into the clean and wholesome woods? There lay the immortal Lincoln, he who was to dictate the Emancipation Proclamation, not only of four million African slaves, but of mankind.

Three great names shine forth in American history and glow with supreme effulgence; Columbus, Washington, Lincoln. Columbus was European and however great his heart, however lively his sympathies, he could hardly have refrained from passing a man of Lincoln's appearance, had they chanced to meet, with scarce a glance and that glance one of curiosity, if not disdain. His schooling, training and accomplishments had all been in another world, an atmosphere of gentle breeding and courtly polish. Lincoln's rugged personality, his plain common sense theories, his loosely fitting garments covering his large angular frame, could but have shocked the stately flowing-robed astronomer, who first saw round the world "in his mind's eye" and in an effort to follow the circle science cast for him alone, first set foot upon the Western Hemisphere. So foreign is he in nature to those who finally made settlement in America, and to their children, who hewed out of the savage tenanted wilderness these democratic states, that his spirit is translated into a goddess, and what part of our country is symbolically given to its discoverer is known as Columbia. Although the country was discovered by Columbus, he is, and always will be, as foreign to it as the language he spoke or the robes he wore.

Washington was born in Virginia, but in a certain sense he was not a native to the soil. He was, indeed, a grand figure in the world; his bearing, his countenance, his manners, and his ideals would have been as much at home in the Roman Re-



public a sin the new fledged democracy his genius brought into life with the confederation of the original states. He, too, would have needed a friendly preparation before an introduction to Lincoln would have brought them into any kind of harmonious equality.

Lincoln had none of the physical refinements and few of the mental characteristics of either of his predecessors in the building of America. The new world demanded a new kind of human being. Such was Abraham Lincoln, the most pronounced type of the race which has come to be known as American. We speak of America as new, although its blood is the blood of all old nations, as its philosophy and its religion is that of all ancient peoples. Lincoln was like America itself; seemingly formed on the plan of its mighty mountain ranges, its rich prairies, its rushing and commanding rivers, its stern-fibred forests, its pronounced seasons, and its ever increasing riches running through all its veins and ever returning in the plenteous and varied products of the soil. Had it been the Creator's design to symbolize the western world in one human being, it may be said with all reverence that the ideal was expressed in seeming perfection in this mighty man.

The strength, the vigor, the far-extended, unfettered America,—uncharted, unconquered, throbbing with life, now rocked with the passion of unbridled storm, now soft and melancholy with the meditative Indian Summer, but ever new and beautiful, as it was ever august, strange and wooing—this was and is America. This was and is Lincoln.

And if Lincoln in this large sense was made in the image and likeness of America, he was in a more precious and intimate sense an image and likeness of the people he so marvelously led and held and inspired through such troubled years as no other ruler ever encountered. Literally, Lincoln

was a man of the people; not only a man of the people of America but of the people of the world, irrespective of race, color or condition. For did not he himself say that he was upholding the cause of freedom for the world, and was he not nobly saving "the last, best hope of earth"?

Such are the thoughts as in imagination we have sat with crossed legs on the rough stool in the dimly lighted cabin of the Lincolns, our hands lightly resting on the cradle of their boy. And how precious they make every cradle, how sacred the life of every babe that lies therein. For who so wise to know what hand at this moment is rocking the cradle of another great Truth Teller who is to rule or save the world? Sacrilegious indeed were this projection of imagination to the humble backwoods home of our sainted Lincoln, unwarranted beyond measure these free flights into the realm of his unpolluted babyhood, were the mission one of idle curiosity, were the speculations of the God-crowned hours of his nativity born of idle dreams. But we who venerate the name of this great soul have no such feelings in our hearts. We revere this man and the memory of him as much as any "this side of idolatry." Stripped of all wordly vanities we sit with these humble parents in their bare cabin, holding with trembling hands to the hopes of future generations that are slowly germinating in the life-drops of that innocent child, about whose gentle slumbers troop unseen the spirits of the fragrant green wood, the spirits of wisdom and truth and benevolence, of wit and mirth, of power and love and unapproachable forgiveness.

The night is gone. The stars that jewel the treetops disappear. Dawn drapes the eastern sky with crimson glories. And looking the clear-eyed father straight in the eyes we pass in silence to the dewy air of the newborn day, our

finger tips alive with the memory of that blessed touch upon the cradle of the child whose shoulders are yet to be bowed beneath the weight of marshalled human woe.

Every woman with her child in her arms is at heart a Madonna. This is true even in thickly settled communities where employments are diversified and the mind has many and varied distractions. But on the frontiers of civilization, where the mother and child are pressed closely together for companionship and the depths of impenetrable forests and the great silences of nature fill the heart with unusual hopes or strange forebodings, the supreme mystery of birth and motherhood become a thousand times more wonderful and holy.

Abraham Lincoln had a mother of sweet and gentle presence. Those who knew her as the lovely and imaginative girl, Nancy Hanks, and afterwards as the wife of Thomas Lincoln, speak of her with peculiar admiration and respect. The crude speech of the backwoodsman, when she becomes the subject of his recollections, is softened and refined, like that of one who speaks of a sacred mystery. She was tall in stature, slender, graceful, delicate, retiring, heroic, patient, loving, beautiful; plain to one, to another colored like a wild rose. Gay and smiling always, according to this old neighbor; sad and pensive to another. Out of place among her primitive surroundings, this one remembers; a woman born for solitude and brave undertakings, we are assured by another. A woman of little learning but of quick wit, declares a third; she had a good knowledge of books, could read just as if she were talking, and could make a book seem like something alive and its happenings take place before your eyes, another tells us.

Piece together meager bits of description picked up by industrious Lincoln biographers from the small number of

people who knew her, and you will get some idea of a rich and elusive, but marvelously blended nature, that gave life to him whose own life was such a puzzling enigma. "No man ever drew his infant life from a purer or more womanly bosom," says J. G. Holland in his "Life of Abraham Lincoln," and this he writes reverently after the most careful and detailed search in every quarter where there could remain the slightest memory of her.

Were every other evidence lacking, that of the son himself, in his boyhood acts and in his every reference to his mother throughout his life, is yet enough upon which to build the paragon of womanhood. Lincoln had many ways of expressing his feelings as well as of hiding them, but in the field of truth he stood almost alone among men as having seldom uttered a word that might have a double meaning, or of ever having passed the door of pure sentiment but with uncovered head and hushed and bated breath. And he said, long after the maple leaves that fell upon the mound which marked the first great tragedy of his life had mouldered into dust and sprung again to life above her, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my mother \* \* \* blessings on her memory."

Thomas Lincoln cleared the forest, stalked deer and wild turkey, worked at his carpenter bench in the stump-infested clearing, a big-chested, hearty, good natured man, stretching his bulk before the log fire at night to repeat droll stories of the day's doings.

The nearest neighbor was three miles away and the journey thither followed an almost impenetrable trail beset with wild beasts and full of unnamed dangers. Evening visitors were few. The family was much alone. No doubt the boy was often on the parent knee and the brawny hand caressed the tiny baby with a touch as zephyr light, as that with which



the mother ran her more delicate fingers over the father's bush of uncropped hair.

But brave hearts, clear brains, and healthy bodies do not make social intercourse either easy or general in a wilderness spotted by a few scattered clearings. Men and women who are carving out a home on the picket line of that great army of Earth adventurers, who have been born to make the wilderness blossom like the rose, must "have that within that passeth show"; that smouldering fire of self-sufficiency which makes them companions to wood and stream, to mountain and valley, to the crude tools that come to fit so closely their strong hands; such are the "home folks" of the isolated cabin that hardly shelters them from the rude blasts of Nature's changing moods. And Thomas Lincoln, knowing nothing of books, and Nancy, his wife, knowing completely those she had, were forced to find the audience for their thoughts and feelings in their children, especially in that small bit of human flesh and blood, the male child so lately come from his Maker that the image and likeness had yet scarce a mark or lineament of this world upon it.

What dialogues they held in that strange theatre of life to which the one dumb auditor gave quiet heed, let the unfettered imagination supply to an equally silent soul. We may be sure they were not idle thoughts to which those two gave voice in the flickering shadows of those early spring evenings, the rough winds of March rocking the treetops to wild harmonies overhead, the crackling back log punctuating the silences, or adding strange little quavers to the low-pitched voice of the woman or the deep growling bass of the man. No author has ever been able to catch the spirit of such conversations. They are like the song of the wood thrush that is never uttered except the singer feels himself alone with his

mate and nestlings. And may they not have the same subtle influence on the cooing babe that the bird song has on its offspring, that somehow absorb the vibrations of the song into their own beings and so in time pour it forth again to astonish the listener with rapturous melody?

Who shall say the babe that nestled between those two primal natures on those evenings of heart communion did not likewise drink in the vibrations of their voices and the wisdom of their honest hearts and tender loves, their hopes and fears for his dim, shadowy future! Perhaps some of those quick answers he delivered with such astonishing appropriateness under stress of a tragic moment in later years were but the echoes of those voices that pleaded for entrance to his uncharted mind in those communal hours.

March passed and April came with its modest wildwood flowers, May with its plum and wild apple bloom and fragrance, its ivory-mantled dogwood, the green of the woods above and below, the treetops musically merry with the songs of mating birds, and lively with the flashing of their tireless wings. The long hot days of summer ripened the wild fruits. The frost of fall turned the green leaves red and gold, quickened the woodland sounds as it stilled the saps of tree and shrub, ripened the nuts of hickory and walnut, turned the haws a rich purple, and muffled the streams under a soft blanket of fallen verdure. The snows of winter sent the woodsman forth with his axe, its gleaming blade bit into the boles of great trees with the regular swing of a musician's baton, and the voices of the forest had an occasional chorus of the rush of falling monarchs, tearing their way through their still upright brothers to crash in pathetic ruin along the trembling earth.

So the seasons passed, the days full of homely toil and simple adventure for father and mother Lincoln, the boy

feeding his growing life on the pure air of the spicy greenwood, his ears forever filled with those wonderful symphonies of nature, the rhythm of them becoming every day a greater force in the beatings of his heart, the veins apulse with his young blood.

For four years the boy played about the floor of that little cabin home which had been blessed by his coming. He grew strong and lithe, the black hair of his father falling about the gray eyes of his mother, as he crept across the threshold to welcome the return of the woodsman carpenter, or toddled to clasp the outstretched hands of his mother, coaxing him to his early pedestrian journeys along the far-stretched lines of the cabin floor.

And while the child grew lithe-limbed and active, the father's ambition rose somewhat and by hard toil he cleared another patch of ground in a more fertile region to the northward and built a more commodious home of logs, into which the family moved. No doubt the gentle mother cast many a pensive glance back to that home whereto had come her first-born son, and wherein she had nursed him through the dangers of isolated childhood. This new land lay low between the hills and was subject to floods by freshets after heavy rains. A child of four in modern life is looked on as but a baby to be nursed with gentle care. But your primitive man-child must be something of an adventurer at four.

In those three years following the removal to the new home, the neighbors remembered that this boy had already begun to make himself useful in many ways about the farm and workshop. He learned by journeys of discovery into the nearby thickets, the names of plants and flowers, to distinguish birds by the colors of their plumage and their differing songs. His first alphabet was that of the great book of Nature

wherein the Creator has writ large for those with minds alive to read as they run. But he learned, too, at his mother's knee, the alphabet of the books of man and so the words of that other sacred volume, writ by command of the same Presence in the language of man's invention.

Could there have been a better school for one who was finally to be set at the head of a liberty-loving people, to decipher the puzzle of freedom and slavery tied together and knotted as securely as might be by the most subtle and selfish minds of an era of giant intellects in the new America? How those short decisive commands from the old Hebrew lawmakers' edicts rooted themselves into his soul-soil, his after days give ample proof. How that young mind, with no distractions of urban life, composed—unknowingly, no doubt, but still composed—those sublime and tender messages from the Sermon on the Mount with the sermon of the sunshine flooding the swaying trees and making silver and golden the ripples of the flowing stream, may be read in every one of those inspired speeches; in every one of the marching state papers; in every single message of love to a stricken mother of a soldier wounded or slain; in every mental blow struck, with the same sharp directness and unswerving aim that made his woodsman's ax the wonder of his fellows.

It is sacred soil, this infant mind, and so the wise young mother knew and saw that it was sown with perfect seed. It would be well if every mother knew this, and heeded and saw to it that her offspring's mind in the virgin spring of life was sown with seed as truly clean and fine and rich with Christly virtues. Not then would men like Lincoln stand forth in such colossal stature above their fellows, for the race would lift and grow and match him in its height of honest worth. Other things the mother taught her boy: to write, to understand



simple arithmetic, but most of all to reason, and to hold fast that which is good.

The strong fibres and steel sinews of his body he had inherited from his father; also that simplicity and common sense that gave him such poise and patience that the undiscerning called him lazy, failing to measure him by his steady and continual achievements against nature, and by his big-souled determination neither to complain of circumstances nor to be weak enough to let fate know his hands were under the anvil. Those were Abraham Lincoln's most pronounced attributes on his man side, patience to toil without complaint or boast, and wisdom to know that all toil, his or others, was worthy of recompense to the toiler. In this much Thomas Lincoln and Abraham were one. Also in the tireless muscles of the flexible body, the powerfully-knit frame, the almost superhuman strength, and, when aroused, the thunderous anger of the lion brought to bay. Few men ever saw Lincoln enraged but those few never forgot it, and forever after he was the subject of their fearful wonderment. This was Thomas Lincoln's contribution to the world's work which his son was to do.

The mother's was no less important, no less the good and perfect gift for the purpose. Like her, he had a gentle and imaginative mind, a heart quick with endless sympathy, a delicacy of conception poetic in its quality, and an intuition that made him the seer of his age and the prophet of the future of Democracy.

It took years of trial and the tragedy of a dismembered Nation, wherein brother fought brother and father fought son in hand-to-hand battle to the death, to bring into perfect composition those qualities of his parents which, united, made Abraham Lincoln the great figure of his own short hour

upon the tragic stage of this life action, wherein we all are "such stuff as dreams are made of," and set him forever as high as the heart of God in the pantheon of immortals.

What kingly mansion owned such riches as that small Kentucky cabin wherein Abraham Lincoln first saw the light, and whereto his mind always reverently turned as to the source of all his worth and greatness? What are crowns and diadems and scepters, courtiers and ladies-in-waiting, thrones and courts, compared to the humble home where Thomas and Nancy lived and brought forth Abraham and gave him such properties of body and mind and heart and soul that he could do the work he did? What is poor or humble or degraded in the picture of those three wonderful human beings seated in that humble cabin before the flickering firelight, the freedom of four million slaves in their hands, and the sublime teaching of manhood and honor and worth for all the future ages in their eyes?

Cut off the past sharp there at that Kentucky cabin with only those three figures to open the world's story, and what have we sacrificed out of what we really know of honor or justice or love or hope or patience or fruitful action or the despising of all that is mean or worthless or vulgar, in this strange human tragedy which we call life? Man, Woman, Child; Thomas, Nancy, Abraham. The story is written. The stage is set. The drama is enacted. Ring down the curtain. Nothing more is to be said of this drama of humanity, unless it be the epilogue which shall explain what good is yet to come because these three have lived and one has played the leading part in thrusting forth from mortal mind the false and sham, and in bringing in the better light, the true and fine, the noble, sweet and lovely.

Knob Creek, which was the scene of this early teaching of

Nancy's boy, took heavy toll of Thomas Lincoln, and year after year swept over his little clearing to the partial or utter ruin of his crops, and once more the little family pressed on toward the golden West whose promises have ever wooed the pioneer on land as they wooed the adventurer on sea. This time the migration was across the Ohio River and through a dense forest for eighty or ninety miles to the final earthly home of Nancy Hanks Lincoln in an Indiana wilderness.

Abraham was now seven years old. He was large for his age, healthy with the health of the big out-of-doors. He knew little of the fear of those "ills that flesh is heir to" in the sophisticated beliefs of children who grow up in closely settled communities where disease is often the subject of family gossip, as well as of more or less intelligent study by the heads of the household. The Lincolns were a sturdy race and no doubt a few simple herbs served to medicine their ills, whatever sickness visited them. No record is extant where Lincoln or any of his contemporaries have mentioned any disease ever having attacked the boy, either in childhood or later in life. He seems to have been peculiarly blessed with health, bodily strength, and a fearless spirit.

It was this fine start in natural growth and development that gave him the almost superhuman strength and endurance of after years, especially those five years of almost continuous soul agony of the White House, when sleep, for long periods of time was almost entirely abandoned, while with watchful wakefulness he studied and pondered the problems that threatened the dissolution of the Union, his hand alone holding together the trembling parts, his mind alone comprehending the full significance of the tragedy that was being enacted. Ah, how much the world owed to those pure winds of the Kentucky woods, the deep breath drawn into the lungs

of the growing boy, filling him with ever renewed vitality as he swung on those long tramps over forest trails!

Partly by flatboat and partly through the tangled woods the little family, father, mother, Sarah and young Abe made their tortuous way for eighty or ninety miles. Often the trees had to be cut and the underbrush cleared to make way for the wagon with its little load of household goods, the all of this strange caravan of four. Arriving at last in Spencer County, Indiana, with the remnants of his possessions saved from wreck and flood, Thomas Lincoln determined to settle. He seemed to sense with a keen appreciation the meaning of man's place in the universe, as evidenced by the fact that he had placed some distance between himself and the land where a white man's labor was in competition with the unpaid labor of the black man, and where the enunciation of the immortal truth that the laborer, of whatsoever color or race, is worthy of his hire, was frowned upon as vulgar if not, in fact, sedition.

It is evident from Lincoln's first preserved utterances, that he drank in at the humble hearthstone of his parents the principle of universal brotherhood. It is evident that throughout his tremendous struggles, first for his own individual unionized self and later for the unionized independence of his beloved country, he never had to unlearn a single item of the teachings of his childhood. There is not a record of one word he ever uttered of sorrow for anything he was taught by his parents, or of any of the things he learned from his meagre collection of books. It was as if an All-seeing Eye and an All-directing Hand guided ever in the instructions of his mind and the books that were placed in his hands. The Bible—from that he learned his letters; from that he got his marvelously terse, vigorous and direct style; also that deep and Solomon-wise manner of reasoning which made him the won-



der and the admiration of his fellow lawyers on the old Eighth Circuit in his days of adolescent practice at the Bar; and later the amazement of statesmen, philosophers, orators and cultured scribes of all civilized nations.

Then, too, he drank deep of the old Greek wisdom in the condensed form of Aesop's Fables, that collection of kohinoors of subtle understanding, in which he, at least, found the substance of a never failing philosophy that served to dispel ignorance and rouse lofty aspirations, alike in the souls of the cultured and the uncultured. There were other books, a few later on, but these were his boyhood's food, and he not only read them faithfully, assiduously, and constantly, but he rephrased them again and again in his own words as a trial of his intelligence and wit and understanding.

Demosthenes declaiming with pebbles in his mouth to give him rotund utterance is a no more striking figure in the history of oratorical achievement, than that of the boy Lincoln rewording Solomon or Aesop on the shaved back of a wooden shovel with a burnt stick for a pen. The account of the boy Jesus leaving his parents to debate with the Rabbis in the Temple at Jerusalem is no more significant of preparation for His mission than that of Abraham Lincoln for his. At sixteen years we see him rising betimes, doing his chores, and walking seventeen miles to hear Blackburn plead law in a crowded court, sitting all day on a hard stool, dinnerless, drinking in the arguments and absorbing the proceedings of law, and then once more covering the seventeen miles on foot to do his evening chores and creep to his hard bed, to recount again and again the day's proceedings. It is of undisputed record that Lincoln did this, not for one day only, but for all the days in turn, so long as the court term lasted. And he himself testified long afterward that it was this strange tuition which

gave him the foundations of his law practice, the spur to his indefatigable study of the art of oratory.

There is much useless lumber in the accounts of Lincoln's childhood, so far as they apply to a penetrating study of his real character, and the principal things by which it was developed and made whole for the high place he occupies among the earth's preferred heroes; but dig among this lumber in whatever quarter it lies piled, and you will always come upon a few facts that fit together with such beautiful precision that they are like the two or three witnesses who agree absolutely in any case to prove its justice and certitude. These are the religious vigor of mind in both his parents, and the natural love of truth which possessed them; the unerring judgment of Lincoln's mother as to what was best in literature such as the Bible, Aesop and Robinson Crusoe, and her love of the beauty of holiness, not of creed or doctrine, but the clean holiness of flower and breeze, of the rhythm of winds, the glory of the sunshine and moonlight and the ever clear-eyed stars. There is also the homely humor of the father, his uncomplaining patience, his unworded hope expressed in his methodical journeys toward a state of freedom and equality, and his kinelike placidity and common-sense.

Of such universal elements was Abraham Lincoln compounded. These attributes fed him in his cradle, enveloped him in his first toddlings across the puncheon floor of the Kentucky cabin, stalked beside him as he stumbled through the swamps and tangled undergrowth, driving the team across that unknown trail into the Indiana country. And when he had passed beyond the personal influence of those great gray eyes filled with mother love and prophetic musing for her stalwart boy, and beyond the home comradeship of

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that heavy-footed, deep-chested, glinting-eyed father, the spirits of that mother and father still walked beside him, their dual natures still grew together in him, lifted him up, sustained and kept him with his hand on the heart of humanity, his feet planted firmly on the great ever-breeding earth, his head among the brave and noble and wise and loving of all countries and of all time.

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## *Chapter III*

# BOYHOOD

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**W**HEN ABRAHAM was nine years old his mother died. An epidemic of "milk sickness" carried away several of the scattered population of the frontier settlement, which did not boast even a visiting doctor. For seven days the slender toil-worn woman lingered on the verge of the great mystery, with Sarah, the eldest child of eleven years, and the boy Abraham, her only attendants. Thomas Lincoln, the father, could hardly have spared the time from getting family supplies out of the rugged surroundings, to remain long at her bedside. When she knew the end to be near, Mrs. Lincoln called her two children to her and whispered her final admonitions. She bade them be good to one another, and expressed the hope that they might live, as they had been taught by her, to love their kin and worship God. Placing her hand on Abe's head she told him to be kind to his father and sister. And then they were alone.

The mother of him who was to be the Liberator of a race paid her debt to nature in the very heart of nature. The weary body was at rest and, let us believe, the soul found ineffable peace and spiritual understanding. The winds in the trees chanted a requiem for her while the majesty of death put its seal upon the sad, sweet face and stilled forever the limbs that had borne the heat and burden of a pioneer existence.



For a year after his loss Thomas Lincoln kept the home and did what he could to fill the place of the departed mother to his children. But no matter how solicitous he may have been for their comfort, his care must have been of the most primitive kind. We are informed that the boy and girl slept on a bed of corn husks and leaves in one corner of the living room. Their clothing was scant and ragged. Their food was the plainest and illy prepared. They ran wild in the woods. Those frequent admonitions to duty and love which the mother had culled from her experience to use for their instruction, no longer fed their young minds with precious maxims. They were waifs in a wilderness, subject to the thoughts and habits of a community made up of the rude and uncultured. But the great brooding spirit of Nature wrapped them about and poured into their young lives the balm of her immeasurable tenderness.

It did another thing that had a tremendous influence on the events which were yet in the womb of time. It moved Thomas Lincoln to return to his old Kentucky home and bring back a second mother for his children. Sally Bush Johnston was a widow of some means and Thomas Lincoln had once sought her hand in marriage. He seemed to have found her as lonely in her widowhood as he was in his bereavement. His wooing was brief. The marriage followed hard upon, and with all her household goods they came to the Indiana clearing.

Sally Bush Lincoln almost immediately changed the crude cabin, which was little more than a bare shelter from the weather, into a home. Under her inspiration Thomas Lincoln set to work to improve the cabin, inside and out, and the little family was soon enjoying the comforts and some of the refinements of a more mature civilization.

The new mistress immediately took young Abe to her heart. The settled melancholy, which was a large part of his mother's nature, and which she had bequeathed in even fuller measure to her son, had no place in the homely, motherly heart of the woman who now presided over the destinies of the future Emancipator. She was a practical, commonsense sort, with an inexhaustible capacity for loving and with that clear understanding of others which is an attribute of such love. She seems to have felt from the first that the slender, homely backwoods boy, with his awkward manners, inquisitive conversation, and, at intervals, sudden bursts of passion which flowed over into utter forgiveness, was destined for some great adventure. And whatever she could do to keep his feet in the right path she did unceasingly and wholeheartedly. There is continual evidence that she tried to peer through the clumsy speech into his heart, and prayed that love for him would make her wise to understand aright. How well she succeeded, the words and acts of this remarkable character through all the course of his life give ample proof. Abraham's second mother brought to his instruction and development qualities and virtues which were necessary to supplement those mystical and poetical characteristics bequeathed to him by his first mother, and which, without such addition, might have made him a revolutionary poet but which could never have given to the world the Lincoln we know—the patient, far-seeing, liberty-loving Constitutionalist.

In Herndon's "Life of Lincoln" we have this portrait of the practical side of Sarah Bush Lincoln. Having described the coming of the creaking wagon loaded with its furniture from the Johnston home in Kentucky, and its transfer to the bare interior of the cabin, Herndon goes on to say:

"What effect the new family (Mrs. Johnston had three children by her first husband, John, Sarah and Matilda), their collection of furniture, cooking utensils, and comfortable bedding must have had on the astonished and motherless pair, who from the door of Thomas Lincoln's forlorn cabin watched the well-filled wagon as it came creaking through the woods, can better be imagined than described. Surely Sarah and Abe, as the stores and supplies were rolled in through the doorless doorways, must have believed that a golden future awaited them. The presence and smile of a motherly face in the cheerless cabin radiated sunshine into every neglected corner. If the Lincoln mansion did not in every respect correspond to the representations made by its owner to the new Mrs. Lincoln before marriage, the latter gave no expression of disappointment or surprise. With truly womanly courage and zeal she set resolutely to work to make right that which seemed wrong. Her husband was made to put new doors and windows in the cabin. The cracks between the logs were plastered up. A clothes press filled the space between the chimney jamb and the wall, and the mat of corn husks and leaves on which the children had slept in the corner gave way to the comfortable luxuriance of a feather bed. She washed the two orphans and fitted them out in clothes taken from the stores of her own. The work of renovation in and around the cabin continued until even Thomas Lincoln himself, under the general stimulus of the new wife's presence, caught the inspiration and developed signs of intense activity."

Sarah Bush is described by her granddaughter in after years as "a very tall woman, straight as an Indian, of fair complexion, and was, when I first remember her, very handsome, sprightly, talkative, and proud. She wore her hair

curled until gray; was kind hearted and very charitable and also very industrious."

But notwithstanding her thoroughly practical side, the strain of mysticism, which crops out from almost every person who had anything to do with Lincoln's early life, had its controlling seat in this good woman's nature; for does she not say to Herndon after the death of President Lincoln: "I did not want Abe to run for President, and I did not want to see him elected. I was afraid something would happen to him, and when he came down to see me, after he was elected President, I still felt, and my heart told me, that something would befall him, and that I should never see him again."

From the plain cabin in the Indiana forest Abraham Lincoln went forth to the first school he ever attended. The teacher was Hazel Dorsey and the school house a mile and a half from the Lincoln farm. He studied assiduously what books he had, and before the firelight in the evening practiced compositions on the back of a wooden shovel, as well as with pieces of chalk on the logs he shaved for the purpose. He had to "knock off" school when there was any work on the farm or in the woods that he could help to do, so that a few months during a year or two in the log school house was all the schooling he got at this time. Then the neighborhood probably concluded it could not afford a school teacher, as for several years we hear no more of Abe's being schooled: or until he was fourteen, when Andrew Crawford taught for a short time, and again when he was seventeen, when he walked four miles to be instructed by one Swasey and became proficient in spelling and composed several "compositions" which were so highly considered that they were kept in manuscript until they became a part of the history of a Nation's martyr. He is said to have loved his books and



made every effort to master the rudiments of an education.

Sarah Bush in later life reported that Abe's father thought he wasted too much time over his books when out of school, but that she persuaded him to let the boy read and study at home, and that once reconciled to the unusual thing of a backwoods boy having a real hunger for books, the elder Lincoln encouraged the lad to apply himself to the tasks. So it came to be a rule in the house that when Abe was at his books he was not to be disturbed but left to read until he quit of his own accord.

Like Shakespeare, with his Horn Book and the Bible, Lincoln in his school days had very few books, but they were well worth while, the same Bible from which the poet of the purple page drank such deep drafts, a spelling book with its reading lessons culled from classic literature, and some lessons in arithmetic set down by the teacher. Few fountains, but clear and deep. And in them his thirst for knowledge found ever increasing satisfaction.

He was as fond of play and of rough and tumble sports as any of the other boys of the neighborhood. He was very much of a boy and liked to exercise a boy's privileges and prerogatives. He worked, too, swinging his ax with the woodsmen of experience. But his hunger for knowledge caused him often to seem to loiter at his tasks. He would stop work in the field to make a stump speech to the other workers or stretch himself on the grass to commit a bit of poetry to memory. This method of getting an education was so much a part of his nature that it continued throughout his life. When he was helping Offut to prepare a flat boat to carry produce to New Orleans, his employer complained of his stolen moments for study and charged him with being lazy.

"I can work," replied the gawky Abe. "My father taught me to work, but he did not teach me to love it."

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## *Chapter IV*

# YOUTH

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**Y**OUNG ABRAHAM shot up toward physical manhood with such remarkable rapidity as to cause comment even among the group of frontiersmen who might look for sturdy development among children living altogether in the open. During his eleventh year he gained two inches in height. He grew continually tall and wiry until at the age of seventeen he stood six feet two in his stockings, if he had any, which is doubtful. Buckskin trousers, linsey-woolsey shirt, moccasins and a squirrel-skin cap were his continual wear from childhood. He was always grown out of his clothes so that his long arms and legs protruded far beyond the sleeves and legs of his garments. He had a bushy head of coal black hair, rugged features, deep-set eyes, a large mouth, and big hands and feet. His physical strength was prodigious for a boy. He early learned to use it with skill in running and wrestling which made up most of the sports of the rural community.

But life within this awkward frame had a rhythmical urge and when it was stirred by emotion gave quickness, deftness and a certain wild grace to the otherwise uncouth figure. His nature was gentle and a hereditary melancholy gave a winning sadness to his features which was one of the most noticeable characteristics of his countenance.

Labor with small return is the lot of pioneers. About him the boy saw men and women slaving from daylight to dark at clearing the forest, or tilling the small bits of land reclaimed from the tangled skirts of wooded hillsides. With few tools and no instruction they worked out their problems of shelter, clothing and the culture of a wilderness. Constant use of those primitive tools made them expert in applying them to their necessities. The woodsman came finally to swing an ax with the accuracy of a practiced swordsman. He could fell a tree and leave no marks upon the separated trunk other than the one smooth wound, cut with the certainty and directness that marks the journey of a surgeon's knife. He could hew to the line, planks for his puncheon floor. His ax and he were inseparable, and the training of muscle and mind to the unison required for so many thousand skillful blows was an education on concentration, such as no college curriculum can supply.

Abraham learned all these things, not from instruction but from experience. He labored as the bee labors, or the ant, not from love of labor but from the urge of necessity. Labor became to him an element in the creation of a social scheme of things. It was as necessary as breathing to life. And so there came into his heart a realization of man's partnership with Nature in the fields of production; not faint and far away and shadowy, as it must have been, had his knowledge come from reading books alone, but direct and clear, like the stroke of his woodman's ax.

Such was the labor of the humble pioneer. Across the line from the state in which he lived were other states in which white men labored not at all; states in which labor was considered degrading and where it was done by slaves who saw no beauty or utility in it, but only an escape from punish-

ment. Across that border, so close that their cocks and dogs might be mutually heard, white men rode in their carriages, or upon their trained horses, followed the hounds while their black slaves sweated to give them delicate food and rich raiment.

About the crackling log fire of his father's cabin on long winter nights young Lincoln heard stories of the splendor of those southern mansions; their pride and elegance, their worship of ancestry and their scorn of those of their own color who were born to toil and to bear the burden of existence. He heard in those recitals the echo of the blows of the lash upon the backs of human beings, and, as he afterwards said, realized even then that a man who could believe such things were not wrong must have a nature that could see the lash cut into the back of another without feeling it upon his own.

During these years his reading was enlarged by the addition of such books as "Robinson Crusoe," Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," a "History of the United States," and the "Life of Washington." A Louisville newspaper came into the neighborhood and this he scanned for reports of the world beyond his ken. He scanned the pages of his dog-eared "Arabian Nights" for the pleasure of journeys into the realm of the mythical and legendary.

The life of labor by white men around him with its drudgery and privations, its elements of actuality and individual independence, forced into his growing mind comparisons with that of slave labor. This, together with the clear statements of freedom and justice which enrich the pages of every book he is known to have had in his hands from childhood to maturity, were woven into the fibres of his being. The records tell of his passion for making addresses to his boy



playmates upon every possible occasion. Such an evidence of the urge of a boy's mind to utterance presages deep conviction, however crude their expression. Macaulay writing poetry at nine, and many other instances of such early desires of genius to express itself, go far toward giving us an understanding of Abraham Lincoln's mind at this time.

As a boy Lincoln recognized the dignity of free labor and the insult to his own nature of American slavery. The feeling of personal degradation from such an institution broadened and deepened with the years. He ever maintained a positive and unswerving attitude toward the right of every man to the bread which is the product of his own labor. The whole subject is thrown into one compact sentence in one of his replies to Douglas who suggested that Lincoln proposed a social equality of the races.

"I agree with Judge Douglas," he said, "that he (the Negro) is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral and intellectual endowments. But in the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his hands earn, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglass, and the equal of every living man."

The question of labor as a political issue was not up in Lincoln's time, as it has been since and as it is now, when it is rapidly becoming the one mighty question, not only of our country but of the whole world. Fundamentally Lincoln founded his whole principle of the rights of man on labor. He said plainly on two public occasions that, "Inasmuch as most good things are produced by labor, it follows that all such things ought to belong to those whose labor has produced them. But it has happened in all ages of the world that some have labored, and others, without labor, have enjoyed a large portion of the fruits. This is wrong and should

not continue. To secure to each laborer the whole product of his labor as nearly as possible is a worthy object of any good government."

On his way to the Capitol for his first Inauguration, he was surprised at Cincinnati by a delegation of two thousand German workmen whose spokesman addressed him as the champion of free homesteads, and concluded:

"We firmly adhere to the principles which directed our votes in your favor. We trust that you, the self-reliant, because self-made man, will uphold the Constitution and the laws against the secret treachery and avowed treason. If to this end you should in turn be in need of men, the German free workingmen, with others, will rise as one man at your call ready to risk their lives in the effort to maintain the victory already won by freedom over slavery."

In reply Lincoln said: "I deem it my duty to wait until the last moment for the development of the present national difficulties before I express myself decidedly as to what course I shall pursue. I hope, then, not to be false to anything that you expect of me." He agreed then that workingmen are the basis of all government, and that a man's duty is "to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating the conditions of mankind." So far as government lands could be disposed of, he was, he said, "in favor of cutting up the wild land into parcels, so that every poor man may have a home."

In these two speeches he synthesized and vitalized the labor problem; not of the individual, not of the State, not of the separate States, but of the world, universally, just as he had synthesized it in a direct way in the slave question with the declaration that a man was entitled to eat the bread his labor had produced.

Compare with the broader vision of Lincoln, the labor conditions of today with some labor leaders holding that the separate labor union is a law unto itself, without taking into consideration Lincoln's admonition that a man's duty is "to improve his own condition but also to assist in ameliorating the condition of mankind."

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*Chapter V*

MANHOOD

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AT THE AGE of seventeen Lincoln was the tallest as well as the strongest man, physically, in all the country round. He was equally superior in intellect and passion. He had mastered whatever books had come to his hand, including stray books on the law. He had composed an essay on American Government calling attention to the necessity of preserving the Constitution. He had given utterance to a pronouncement on temperance which won the approbation as well as the wonder of a local preacher of renown, and which found publication in an Ohio paper. He had managed a ferry boat across the Ohio, which he afterward declared to be the "toughest work a young man could be made to do." The following year he made an excursion into the outer world by way of a flatboat loaded with provisions, down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, returning by steamboat and on foot across country, an adventure of some moment among a people to whom a visit from one settlement to another was considered a journey worth recounting. He had felt the magnificence of the Father of Waters as it bore him upon its bosom between its rugged shores and past the far-stretched plantations that bordered its swiftly broadening currents. He had had opportunity of contrasting the humble life of frontier civilization under in-



dividual freedom with the busy hum of a metropolitan city where only the few were free and the many were bound to serfdom.

Of these experiences was born the desire for action independent of restraint. He longed to strike out into the broad world where he might try for himself those powers which he felt already swelling in his bosom. But his loyalty to the code that bound him to his father until his majority, held him back. In his perplexity, halting between desire and duty, he sought the advice of William Wood, a lawyer by whose permission he had nosed among the few law books of which his office boasted. His plan was to get a place on one of the boats plying up and down the river. His lawyer friend presented the moral duty that rested on him to remain with his father until he could legally strike out for himself, or until his parent had released him from his filial obligation. He returned home seriously determined not to evade the claim from which in a few months he would be finally released.

And now came to the little group of settlers of the logged-off lands, wooing tales of a country farther west where there were sun-kissed prairies whose splendid soil offered rich returns to the husbandman. The call of the setting sun was in the blood of Father Lincoln and in the year of the son's majority the family moved from Indiana to a new home in Macon County, Illinois. All the children had now grown to man's and woman's estate. Two weddings had been celebrated in the family. Sarah Lincoln, the daughter, had been married to Aaron Grigsby, a young man living in the vicinity, and Mrs. Lincoln's daughter had left the Lincoln cabin for a new home. The new families joined in the emigration. Lincoln's sister, Sarah, died two years later in childbirth, the second great grief that came to chasten the heart of the lonely, studious son of the forest.

From the deep woods of the Indiana home to the broad, verdant prairie lands of central Illinois was a transition which served to give new form and color to young Lincoln's aspirations. Here were rolling prairies, gently wooded slopes, clear water courses flashing in the sunlight, and rich soil needing only the plow's shining blade to prepare it for the seeds and fruits of husbandry. Dennis Hanks, a relative of Lincoln's mother, had gone forward to reconnoiter and select the land, and he had chosen a pleasing prospect on which the new home was to be built. Having helped to complete the new cabin and fence in a tract of the farm, Abraham Lincoln, now twenty-one, stepped forth into the freedom he had longed for. Separation from his home people meant a great deal to him. He needed companions. From childhood he had been intermittently retiring and social. Whatever he discovered in his reading or play that carried laughter or wisdom in its substance he hastened to deliver with his own inventions to his friends. His whole life expressed his hunger for companionship. He read books and practiced recitations in a group of his boyhood friends just as afterwards he composed the Gettysburg Address, on his way to the dedication.

What close companionship meant to Lincoln is shown in every detail of his history that has been unearthed by his biographers. As a child he sought to know everybody in his neighborhood. The proprietor of the village store was his confidant, the school teacher his friend and adviser, the lawyer his model in speech and action. He learned all the ballads current in the region and recited them over and over to whomsoever would listen and wherever the slightest opportunity presented itself. From half melancholy moments of retirement, or from poring over a school book or one of the few works of the imagination which he knew, he would hurry

forth to seek an audience for his literary discoveries. His natural aptitude for mimicry won him warm welcome in any company, young or old.

And the friends he made he held without effort.

On each stage of his journey from his Kentucky birthplace to his home in Illinois his faithful attendants are seen by his side, and the procession moves with the directness of a Greek tragedy toward its destined goal. Crude in construction, homely in form, drawn by patient oxen over unbroken trails through a wild, rough country, the creaking wagons that held the few pieces of furniture and farming tools of the Lincolns, the Grigsbys, the Hanks, could they have had the illumination of prophecy, would have been shown as golden chariots drawn by winged steeds directed by the spirit of advancement. It required twenty-one years to move this young Prince of Liberty from Kentucky to Illinois. But at no period of the journey was he without those familiars who, knowingly or unknowingly, bowed to his will and were as faithful and as loyal to this young son of Nature, as ever were courtiers to their best loved prince in the palace of the King.

Homely indeed in reality those scenes of Lincoln's life from childhood to majority, but strip them of their outward covering and view them in the light of the great events that followed, grew out of them in fact, and no prince the world has known had such gorgeous clouds trailing about him, nor such great-hearted followers and companions as this awkward youth in his linsey-woolsey shirt and buckskin trousers, who found himself reflected in the hearts of what he was pleased later to call the great plain people.

Nature builds with patient wisdom. Mountain peaks that influence the air currents; lakes and rivers that bead the con-

tinents, as well as those heroic figures that star the pages of man's progress, are all monuments to the Supreme intelligence of the Everlasting Builder of the Universe, with its endless procession of harmonious wonders.

To the library student Abraham Lincoln must always seem a baffling puzzle. But to the divine Psalmist who saw the sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, he would have been accepted for what he was, a universal man brought forth from the womb of time, to fill an appointed place in the still unrevealed Scheme of Things. The Andes and the Sierras were not laid of carved stones with a trowel, but lifted mightily on the wings of fire, amid the roar and tumult of forces that defy the loftiest concepts of the imagination.

So too, was Abraham Lincoln created. Generations of ancestral struggle amid the privations and dangers of groups of exiles, forming the foundations of a new civilization, were present at his birth, and the fires that were to cause an upheaval in that young Nation, and from the throes of which it was to emerge to be the loftiest peak of human liberty, threw a lurid light about the toddling footsteps of his childhood. His young life was fed by primal forces stirring in the hearts of those nearest and dearest to him. In plain words and rugged oaths anti-slavery pioneers assailed his ears with protests against an institution which not only held the black men in bondage, but placed the products of free labor and sacrifice in competition with the products of toil that brought no reward to the toilers beyond the life of an ox yoked to the plow and goaded to uttermost exertion. On such food his soul was fed. On such food it grew toward that sublime power and passion which found utterance in the great proclamation which struck the shackles from the limbs



of four million slaves and set in motion a wave of liberty which will not cease to spread in the souls of men until there is no longer one bondman left to cry out against the injustice of his fellow man.

Having grown and developed in this atmosphere of fellowship, Lincoln's proposal to go alone into the world must have required considerable determination, no matter how strong the pull toward individual independence may have been. He needed hourly companionship, and such companionship as only those rough, honest friends whom he had known from childhood could supply. Some prophetic whisper in his soul must have informed him that in the work he was to be set to do, he would have to find his strength in himself, for he seems to have cut clear of all his former associates although his first adventures were only a few miles from the paternal cabin.

He was trying his right to walk alone, and testing his ability to hold a steady pace with unsupported strides. The difficulties he encountered, the disappointments he met with, the failures which must have tried him sorely, and the final tragedy of the great passion that tore his heartstrings up by the roots and threatened reason itself, like furnace fires of suffering, fitted his soul to bear its future burdens, as his boyhood struggles with physical nature had fitted his body to bear the burdens of a Nation's woes and fight a Nation's battles in the supreme test of democratic government. In the years that followed he used the skill he had acquired from experience in manual labor to supply the necessities of existence. All energies of mind and body beyond this were bent on acquiring knowledge, on winning new followers to take the place of those he had left at the old home, and in cutting away the debris of luxuriance of expression from the statements of naked truth, with the keen strokes of his intellect,

as with the keen blade of his ax he had cut away the luxuriance of the forest to bare the soil for husbandry.

Lincoln's methods for securing the ends he had in view were as original and peculiar to himself as those of Nature. Striking out, he did not hurry to some pretentious settlement. He found food for his grazing near by. He did whatever work came to his hand, and it took him a whole year to reach any sort of permanent home at New Salem. During this time he read whatever books of history, government, romance, or philosophy he could lay hands on and made orations to audiences of unresponsive stumps or whispering groves.

He made acquaintances which he won into close friendships by his adaptability to their personalities and understanding. He moved among the rough and crude, using their language, accepting their conventions and joining in their sports and amusements. He did not shun evil but was never tainted by it. He taught morals by applying the humors of life to the false estimates of life. He used his physical strength to win first place in the hearts of companies of border ruffians, and followed this advantage to instil in their minds a respect for fundamental truths with penetrating precision. His sympathies were as broad and deep as his conceptions of life were clean and wholesome. Wisdom grew with the practice of wisdom. He soon discovered that in a trial of wit as in a trial of strength he had no need to fear any immediate opponent.

So his reputation grew. And when Denton Offut, a local promoter whose operations extended up and down the Sangamon River, having a project on foot to build a flatboat and send a stock of provisions to New Orleans, looked about for some one to be captain of the adventure, he settled on Lincoln. Lincoln's previous journey to that city for a similar

purpose probably led Offut to his choice. With the help of John Hanks and John Johnston, who came to join their former boy companion in the enterprise, these three men, skilled in making much with a few crude tools, completed the boat, made the journey, and returned, the promoter counting a fair profit on his investment.

It was during this visit to New Orleans that Lincoln is said to have witnessed the public auction of a slave girl. John Hanks furnished Herndon with the following account of it.

"One morning in our rambles over the city we passed a slave auction. A vigorous and comely mulatto girl was being sold. She underwent a thorough examination at the hands of the bidders; they pinched her flesh and made her trot up and down the room like a horse to show how she moved, and in order, as the auctioneer said, that 'bidders might easily satisfy themselves' whether the article they were offering to buy was sound or not. The whole thing was so revolting that Lincoln moved away from the scene with a deep feeling of 'unconquerable hate.' Bidding his companions follow him, he said, 'By God, boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing (meaning slavery) I'll hit it hard.'"

Returning to St. Louis by boat the party separated, Hanks and Offut going to Springfield while Lincoln and Johnston followed the road to Coles County, Illinois, to which point Thomas Lincoln had moved. Having paid his paternal visit and settled the pretensions of one Daniel Needham, a famous wrestler who challenged the returned boatman to a test of strength, Lincoln made his way again to New Salem. This was in August, 1831.

A few days after Lincoln's arrival Offut put in an appearance with the statement that he had a stock of merchandise on the way from Beardstown. He immediately retained the

services of Lincoln to assist him in marketing the goods when they should arrive. The young adventurer put in the intervening time making himself popular as a story teller, lending ready assistance to any one having a difficult task on hand, and devouring whatever printed matter fell under his observing eye. An election proceeding and Mentor Graham, a school teacher of considerable learning, having the matter in charge, noted Lincoln lingering near and asked him if he could write.

"I can make a few rabbit tracks," was the good-natured reply.

He was put to work and proved such a careful and accurate clerk that Graham became interested at once. During the afternoon when things were dragging a little Lincoln entertained the voters with stories which proved so palatable to his audience that he was the center of an animated crowd for the entire evening following the counting of the votes.

A few days later Lincoln was employed by Dr. Nelson, who after the style of the dignitaries of later days, started with his family for Texas in his "private conveyance"—which in this instance was a flatboat, "The Texas." Lincoln was hired to pilot the vessel through the Illinois River. Arriving at Beardstown the pilot was discharged and returned on foot across the sand hills to New Salem.

Offut's merchandise having arrived, Lincoln was placed in charge. A country store in those days was the meeting place of all the male gossips of the village. Lincoln generally had an audience for his quaint fables and striking parables. If they were not basically his own, his original phrasing, art of mimicry and telling gestures made them so. Offut, a man of loud activities, deep potations, but withal warm-hearted and generous, was proud of the abilities of his talented clerk and boasted without stint of his mental and physical prowess.



He challenged the world to combat in the name of Lincoln, either in debate or in feats of strength and skill. It is a well-established fact that Lincoln during this period, by the aid of a harness he himself constructed of straps and ropes, lifted a dead weight of 1,999 pounds.

At Clary's Grove lived a set of boys who were the terror of the entire region. Such groups have ever been the natural product of American frontier settlements. The Clary Grove boys headed by Jack Armstrong took up the boastful challenge of Offut, and proposed a wrestling bout between Armstrong and Lincoln. Not without protest Lincoln finally agreed to the match. He was now fully matured, stood six feet four in his stockings, and weighed 234 pounds. Armstrong was bulky and strong as an ox. During the struggle and when Lincoln was getting the best of the tussle, the Clary Grove crowd broke into the ring and attempted foul tactics to save their champion from defeat. This so enraged Lincoln that he caught his antagonist by the throat, lifted him bodily from the ground, shook him like a rag, and flung him prostrate out of the ring. So impressed were the Clary Grove boys with this exhibition of strength and the righteous anger of the young wrestler, that they became at once his advocates. From this time forward Armstrong was his warm friend, and his wife Hannah, and all others of the Clary Grove contingent welcomed the new champion to their circle. They gave him loyal support in all his appeals to the public and when he ran for office discarded their party affiliations to give him their votes. Lincoln appreciated their friendship and support and in after years proved his gratitude by saving one member of the Armstrong family from the gallows.

But neither the interests of the store nor the seductions of athletic exhibitions could keep the young student from his

books. His determination to have knowledge was the main-spring of his being. He studied in season and out of season. The store counter supplied him with a place to stretch his long figure, and with a bolt of calico under his head and a book before his face he made the lax hours of trade yield him deep draughts of the best thought of the world. But true to his boyhood habit, he was ever anxious to divide his mental treasures with anyone who happened along. He read books while he walked through the streets. He read them seated on store boxes in the shadow of a building. His library was his armpit and it was seldom without one or more volumes to answer his needs. Following a suggestion of Mentor Graham he hunted up one Vaner who was reputed to own a copy of Kirkham's Grammar, and having secured the coveted volume began diligently to master the science of the English language. He delved into Arithmetic also. And when Offut, in the words of Lincoln, "petered out" and the store passed into other hands, Lincoln continued in New Salem making friends and gaining knowledge and wisdom after his own original fashion.

In the spring of 1832, New Salem was thrilled with the news that a steamboat was on its way down the Sangamon. The navigability of this river was one of the live questions of the day in that part of the country, and the people of Springfield and New Salem made great preparations to welcome the coming of Captain Vincent Bogue's "Talisman," as the boat was named, and which the enterprising captain was bringing from Cincinnati. On the day of her arrival all the people round and about New Salem were gathered to make fitting demonstration of joy. The boat tied up at Bogue's mill and there was much cheering, songs, speeches and general rejoicing. Lincoln, who with a company of axmen had cleared the

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branches from over the stream, took advantage of the occasion to increase his acquaintance and popularity. And while the steamboat was destined to destruction at the end of the voyage and the navigation of the Sangamon finally abandoned, the theme served Lincoln for campaign material a year later, when he made his race for a seat in the State Legislature.

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## *Chapter VI*

# PURIFYING FIRES

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THE EXCITEMENT occasioned by the arrival and departure of the Talisman had hardly subsided when the Black Hawk War broke out and Lincoln was chosen Captain of a company of volunteers to combat the wily old Indian Chieftain. It was his first official trust and he prized the distinction to its full worth. His company was composed of the Clary Grove boys and others of their ilk, wild young fellows unused to discipline of any kind, and the young and inexperienced captain found them difficult to manage. Through their disregard of law he met the first public humiliation of his career. A number of the recruits one night broke into the quarters of the regular army officers and carried off by stealth a goodly supply of wines and liquors which they drank during the night. Morning found them unable to resume their march. An investigation followed, and their innocent captain was condemned to wear a wooden sword for two days, because of their escapade. What chagrin this undeserved disgrace must have cost the temperamental Lincoln can be imagined, but he bore it with dignified calm however deep his resentment.

During this campaign Lincoln suffered a second humiliation at the hands of Soldier Thompson, who managed to throw him twice in succession. A footrace between the two



followed in which Lincoln was also defeated. The overthrow of their Captain champion did not lessen the confidence of his men in him. They gave him obedience and respect in full, something regular army officers were unable to win from them, no matter what the occasion.

An incident of this campaign of which Lincoln was the central figure, was prophetic of his conduct under many similar but far more trying circumstances later in life. An old Indian, hungry and helpless, strayed into camp. The volunteers were for killing him at once, notwithstanding the fact that the savage produced a letter from General Cass, recommending him for his past kind and faithful services to the Whites. They pilloried him as a spy and were bent on making an example of him. They might have put their threats into execution had not their tall Captain appeared upon the scene. Becoming aware of their purpose, Lincoln, his face swarthy with resolution and rage, interposed between them and their intended victim. Lincoln's determined look and demand that, "It must not be done," obtained obedience. But one of the volunteers, bolder than his fellows, cried out: "This is cowardly on your part, Mr. Lincoln."

The Captain, towering in lonely power, answered directly: "If any man thinks I am a coward let him test it." And there were none to take up the challenge.

The grateful Indian was released, and Lincoln's authority established.

The volunteers were finally discharged and Lincoln, with the others, returned to New Salem just before the state election. During their campaign against the Indians, the volunteers had declared Lincoln should be their candidate for the Legislature and he was accordingly presented for that position by almost the entire community. He had the friendship

of the neighborhood and the few mishaps of his career as a soldier had only aroused their sympathy. Lincoln allied himself with the Whig organization and championed its principles. His opponents were Jackson men. But party lines were not closely drawn in New Salem. The man rather than the Party must have their allegiance. In his first speech of the campaign and just as he was beginning his address, a fight was started. Lincoln, seeing a friend getting worsted in the row, hurried from the platform, grasped the offender and threw him ten feet away. Returning to his station he delivered the following address:

"Gentlemen and Fellow Citizens: I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal improvement system and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same."

Here at the threshold of his entrance to public life, occasion staged a little drama that symbolizes much that is to come. One hour meditation; the next action and utterance. That was Lincoln, boy and man. At the outset of his career he avowed his principles and except that events broadened and deepened their application, they remained the same to the day of his death.

Lincoln was a product of his times. Judge Logan who knew him well, gives the following testimony concerning him at this period:

"He was very tall, gawky, and a rough looking fellow then; his pantaloons didn't meet his shoes by six inches. But after he began speaking I became very much interested in him. He

made a very sensible speech. His manner was very much the same as in after life; that is, the same peculiar characteristics were apparent then, though of course in after years he evinced more knowledge and experience. But he had then the same novelty and the same peculiarity in presenting ideas. He had the same individuality that he kept through all his life."

Early in this campaign Lincoln issued a political circular, his first written address to the public. It contains abundant evidence of close thinking, political sagacity and quaint utterance. It is a sober production expressing thoughts that go straight to the heart. The same lucidity of thought and directness of style, which marks his greatest State Papers, is discernible here. The address deals mainly with the navigability of the Sangamon River, a subject dear to the hearts of his constituents, and just then materially emphasized by the recent arrival of the steamboat *Talisman*.

At this period he proclaimed the doctrine that the representative of the people should reflect the views of his constituency. He advocated legislation against usury. In conclusion, he maintained that he might be wrong with regard to any or all the subjects he discussed, declaring that it was better only sometimes to be right than to be wrong altogether, and said he was ready to renounce his opinions as soon as he discovered they were erroneous.

"Every man," he observed, "is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether this is true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed by my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem."

His entire philosophy of life, here and hereafter, might have been expressed in a single line of the homely poem, "*Jim Bludsoe*," by John Hay: "He never lied and he never flunked, I reckon he never know'd how."

His appeals were never addressed to reason alone but always to the whole man: reason, sympathy, love. He said at this time, "Should the people in their wisdom see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointment to be very much chagrined."

Already the shadow of impending tragedy seems to have fallen upon his sensitive soul. Already he was taking up the burden of the fardel-bearing who "grunt and sweat under life's weary load." Already something of the Isaiah in his nature had caused him, at the age of twenty-three, to be christened "Old Abe."

The results of the election added another to the recent defeats that had followed one another in quick succession. But those who knew him best gave him unalloyed support. Out of a total of 300 votes cast in the Precinct of New Salem, where he was an intimate figure, Lincoln received 277. Politicians noted this popularity among his fellows, and it no doubt proved of value to Lincoln in future political speculations, but just then it was a blow upon the heart. How much he felt it was shown, when many years after the public had forgotten it, he gave details of the election and said with ardent pride that it was the only time he had "ever been beaten on a direct vote of the people."

Lincoln's next step into the field of labor and accumulating knowledge, was as a surveyor. John Calhoun, a stalwart Democrat, selected the young Whig as his assistant, and securing books, Lincoln retired to study. Six weeks application gave him such mastery of the science that he carried on the work with surprising success and exactitude. He was also made Postmaster at New Salem, a position that gave him opportunities of reading the papers that came to subscribers of the district. He is said to have carried the Postoffice



around in his hat. At least he made it a point of being letter carrier to those who were on his surveying routes, and so he became the author as well as the active agent in perhaps the first rural mail route established in this government. With all this activity, Lincoln's apparent leisurely method of doing things increased the impression that he was a lazy man.

Squire Goodby, a local celebrity, recounts the following incident:

"The first time I saw Abe with a law book in his hand he was sitting astride Jake Dale's woodpile in New Salem.

"Says I, 'Abe, what are you studying?'

"'Law,' says Abe.

"'Great God Almighty!' I cried, and left him there."

For three or four years Lincoln continued his New Salem activities, all the time reading law. He wrote deeds and contracts and other legal papers at the call of any citizen, and often appeared before the local Justice of the Peace. All this service was free. He was as indefatigable in gaining experience as he was in showing his appreciation of the genuine friendship and support accorded him. Even when he moved to Springfield, his New Salem friends found his counsel ever at their disposal. His door was open to poverty and riches. His study of the law widened his sympathies and his usefulness. He was building for the future, slowly, solidly, and better than he knew.

During these years of the pursuit of knowledge under circumstances of the most discouraging kind, Lincoln had accepted every offer made him for work that would keep him in food and clothes. He had clerked in the New Salem stores, been for a time a partner in one of them, and when the business failed, because of the dissolute habits of his partner, refused to take advantage of bankruptcy proceedings and

gave his note for the future payment of all their obligations. Under a load of poverty and debt, bound by native instincts to integrity and honor, ambitious for preferment, but still unknown outside of the small neighborhood of New Salem, it may well be conceived that the future looked to him a rough and rugged road.

Lincoln faced his difficulties with uncomplaining fortitude. He proclaimed himself a son of the soil. He shared whatever learning, either of literature or of law that he had acquired, with the humblest of his acquaintances. He was one of the most social souls that God ever made, seeking always an outlet for his emotions in the company of others.

Ann Rutledge was easily the most attractive girl in New Salem. Her father, James Rutledge, was one of the founders of the town. He was a native of Kentucky, warm-hearted, social, generous and hospitable. Besides himself, his family consisted of nine children, three of whom were born in Kentucky. Ann was the third child, a girl of winning personality and with some pretensions to education. Quick of apprehension, industrious, an excellent housekeeper, with a quick wit and great gayety of spirit, she shone with lonely brightness in her crude surroundings.

It is not known just when Lincoln's natural liking for so responsive a companion grew into love. She had many suitors for her hand. But the humorous, studious, toiling, homely young hero of the town could but have held a warm place in her affections. The only rival Lincoln had to fear was John McNeil, a rather dashing young adventurer from the East. Sometimes she seemed to favor one and sometimes the other of her special admirers. Lincoln's wooing must have been of a homely fashion. He was well aware of his awkward body and homely features. But once his heart was set on an idea he

never despaired of finally making it his own. And so he played the cavalier in the primitive way upon every favorable occasion.

For a long time it seemed that Lincoln was the favored suitor. Perhaps had he pressed his suit at the proper time history might have been greatly changed; but having no means to support a wife, it is quite certain that Lincoln was not the man to hasten a marriage that might cause distress and privation to the woman of his choice.

So it came about that the more persistent wooer won the pledge of Ann Rutledge to become his wife. When the village gossips made it known that Ann Rutledge was going to marry McNeil, Lincoln's mournful countenance gave little evidence of the bolt that had pierced his heart. He only retired farther into his books, or sought, with bolder recitals to his comrades, to dispel the gloom that was settling over his soul.

McNeil announced his intention of going East to look after his parents and to bring them back to the settlement. He confessed to Ann that he had been living at New Salem under an assumed name, in order to be free from his relatives until he had made enough money to take care of them. He left New Salem for New York State going overland with horse and buggy. And that was the last New Salem heard of him for many months. The plainspoken villagers were not long in declaring that he had played the roving gallant with Ann and deserted her outright. But she would not believe them and remained faithful to the absent lover.

When Lincoln knew she was much alone and sorrowing, he sought her side and offered his consolations. He told her of his great love for her and asked her to be his wife. But she held firm to her determination to await word from McNeil. At

last her patience was rewarded. A letter came in which McNeil told of sickness, of finding his father ill, and of business that held him at the old home. Letters passed between them, hers warm with affection and trust, his growing ever more prosaic and cold. At last she felt herself deserted and listened once more to Lincoln's pleadings. As the days went by her spirits returned. Her cheeks once more took on their roseate hue, her eyes their old time brightness. But there was a forced gayety in her demeanor which told of a rooted sorrow, a secret grief which no assumed joyousness could disguise. Then she fell ill. For weeks she lingered, consumed by fever. Lincoln was not allowed to see her, although she often called his name. At last one day, when she had been unusually insistent to see him, he was admitted. The door was closed and he remained for nearly an hour.

When he came out there was a deeper grief in his deepset eyes, and his shoulders seemed to bear an invisible burden. What passed between them during that momentous hour never will be known. What confidences, what longings, what bursts of passion, what confessions, only He to Whom the secrets of all hearts are known holds that tragic secret. A few days afterward Ann Rutledge passed away.

She was buried in Concord Graveyard, some distance from New Salem, and Lincoln was left with a breaking heart to mourn for her who had inspired in him that great passion for which men have thrown away kingdoms and women their very hope of immortality.

With Ann Rutledge seemed to go out all the life and light of the world for Lincoln. After his last interview with her he changed so rapidly that his friends feared for his reason. One of Mrs. Rutledge's brothers said afterward that the effect upon Lincoln's mind was terrible. "He became plunged in



despair. He had fits of mental depression, wandered up and down the river and into the woods communing with himself, a gloomy and distracted soul. To one friend he complained that the thought that the "snows and rains fall upon her grave" filled him with indescribable grief.

His condition finally became so alarming that his friends consulted together and sent him to the house of a kind friend, Bowlin Green, who lived in a secluded spot behind the hills. Here, says Herndon, he remained for weeks under the watchful eye of his noble friend who gradually brought him back to reason, at least to a realization of his true condition. In the years that followed, Lincoln never forgot the kindness of Green through those weeks of suffering and peril.

In 1842, when the latter died, and Lincoln was selected by the Masonic Lodge to deliver the funeral oration, he broke down in the midst of his address, his voice choked with deep emotion, he stood for some moments while his lips quivered in the effort to form the words of fervent praise he sought to utter, and the tears ran down his cheeks. Every heart was hushed at the spectacle. After repeated efforts he found it impossible to speak and strode away.

In the field of ambition he had thrice been chastened. In a fateful moment he had met an antagonist who overcame him in feats of physical strength and skill. Through the wild outlawry of his volunteer followers, he had been disgraced in the eyes of the regular army of the United States, and on his first appeal for the suffrage of his fellowmen, he had been definitely beaten at the polls. The deeper currents of his life's emotions had thrice been stirred to their depths by the death of women. His boyhood eyes had seen his gentle mother laid in her lonely woodland grave. His companion sister had gone the same dark way. And now death had laid his cold and

stilling fingers upon her whose worth and beauty had brought him the supreme passion, only to be uprooted, leaving his heart a barren waste of desolation and despair.

God indeed moves in a mysterious way. In the purifying fires of shattered hopes and woeful separations all the grosser elements of his nature were burned and purged away, and Lincoln emerged from the ordeal with an eye single to the sufferings and woes of mankind. Every man who has accomplished any great achievement, has first gone down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Sorrow, bitterness, defeat, and disaster are the steps by which we climb up to the throne of the Great God.

How blessed are the troubles of mankind, how upbuilding in individual character are the defeats we meet on Life's highway! Welcome trouble, welcome defeat, and disaster if they bring to us in fuller measure the understanding of the fact that the joy of life is in giving and the enthusiasm of life is in serving.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
I earn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the  
throe!

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## *Chapter VII*

# CONQUERING HIMSELF

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**T**HE QUALITIES of sympathy, simplicity, directness of statement and a sort of melancholy good humor which made him a story teller of the first order, made Lincoln the hero of New Salem; and his success as a surveyor, and evident love and appreciation of the law, carried his fame to other neighborhoods.

The Whigs gave him support as one of their candidates for the Legislature of 1834, and he was elected. During the session he was content to occupy a modest place, absorbing, as was his wont, knowledge of law making and legislative procedure. He took the measure of his associates and found himself not their inferior in general knowledge and the practice of it. After two scant years of public life he was considered one of the leaders of his Party. No longer waiting on the advice of friends he offered himself as a candidate for renomination. He initiated his campaign with the following political pronouncement:

"To the Editor of the Journal: In your paper of last Saturday I see a communication over the signature of 'Many Voters,' in which the candidates who are announced in The Journal are called upon to 'show their hands.' Agreed. Here's mine.

"I go for all sharing privileges of the Government who

assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently I go for admitting all Whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms, by no means excluding women.

"If elected, I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me.

"While acting as their Representative, I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is; and upon all others I shall do what my judgment teaches me best to advance their interests. Whether elected or not, I go for distributing the proceeds of the sales of public lands to the several states, to enable our state, in common with others, to dig canals and construct railroads without borrowing money and paying interest on it.

"If alive on the first Monday in November, I shall vote for Hugh L. White for President.

"Respectfully,

A. LINCOLN."

The campaign was hot and strenuous. The prairies saw debates as vigorous and important, if not as dignified, as those of the Senate. Early in the campaign Lincoln spoke at Springfield. Among his auditors was a Mr. Forquer, who had the finest house in Springfield, lately protected by the only lightning rod in that locality. Formerly a Whig, his apostacy was awarded with a lucrative office. He felt Lincoln's strong presentation of the principles of the Whig Party. The recent recruit to the Democratic organization replied to Lincoln in a speech of some argument, but filled with scorn and satire. Lincoln responded, in a manner related by Speed as characterized by so great dignity and force that he would never forget the conclusion of that speech.



"Mr. Forquer commenced his speech," said Lincoln, "by announcing that the young man would be taken down. It is for you, fellow citizens, not for me, to say whether I am up or down. The gentleman has seen fit to allude to my being a young man; but he forgets that I am older in years than I am in the tricks and trades of Politicians. I desire to live, and I desire place and distinction, but I would rather die now than, like the gentleman, live to see the day that I would change my politics for an office worth \$3,000 a year, and then feel compelled to erect a lightning rod to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God."

Lincoln did not fling away ambition but ennobled it. With patient footsteps he unrestingly followed the vision of higher place along the road of helpful service to his fellowmen. Years passed, times changed. Events of which he could not have dreamed crowded his stage with giant actors moved by the clashing of tremendous forces of which he was the central figure. His hands held the power of the Nation, but through it all his conduct was governed by these same simple rules he gave at the outset of his career. His words multiplied, his deeds grew many and of first importance, but in the core of each were the seeds of human sympathy and justice.

Lincoln was now launched upon a public career. He loved popularity and knew how to win it. No public man of any period has shown a more comprehensive knowledge of human nature than Abraham Lincoln. He knew the thoughts of the people of his state better than they knew them. He abhorred sham and pretension and loved to submit it to the revealing light of humorous satire. He was easily re-elected to the Legislature at this time and remained in the House as long as he felt it to be to his advantage, and so long as he felt that his duty to the public demanded it.

While he was in the Legislature he became an aggressive champion of the Public Improvement Policy, which contemplated great expenditures of state funds for waterways and railroads. Although the day for those improvements had not arrived and the bonds issued by the state for their construction became a menace to the conscience of the people who talked seriously of repudiation, the improvements which Lincoln saw in his mind's eye have all come about and are greatly extended today, both by private and public means. Even the canal which the Lincoln group of legislators at Springfield conceived and advocated to connect the Illinois River with Lake Michigan, is now one of the proud boasts of modern engineering and operates just as Lincoln said it would. Financial panics in 1837-38 caused such a depreciation in the Illinois State Bonds that the folly of the previous Legislature was made a campaign issue. But the people returned the men who had advocated the public improvements.

The burning of a negro in St. Louis and the murder of Lovejoy at Alton for his abolition utterances forced all others questions into abeyance, and made it necessary for every man before the public in Illinois to take sides in the controversy.

The State Capitol had been moved to Springfield from Vandalia during the previous session of the Legislature, principally through the efforts of Lincoln and his followers, known as the "Long Nine" from Sangamon, each of the rugged statesmen measuring above six feet and weighing more than 200 pounds. Lincoln, too, had left his New Salem home for residence at the Capitol. There domiciled with his friend Speed in a room over his store, the law firm of Stuart and Lincoln having been formed, Lincoln soon became as conspicuous a figure in this aristocratic center, as he had been

in New Salem, where social life was in a way measured by the opinions of the Clary Grove boys. Here were wealthy families whose heads boasted the best blood of Kentucky and Virginia. Lincoln gives a characteristic picture of the spirit of the city of that day in a private letter, in which he expresses a doubt of anyone who could not afford to live in them being satisfied in the surroundings.

"I am afraid you would not be satisfied," he writes. "There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing in it."

No doubt this expresses his own emotions, born of comparing his humble state with that of the society of which his official position compelled him to be a part. Like Burns and Shakespeare, he had no respect for the outward show of honor or distinction, yet he felt with extreme keenness the insolence of office and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.

His complex nature required the spur of some mighty question of human rights to be aroused to definite action, but when face to face with such a problem his decision was determined and uncompromising. He might lend a ready hand at political "log-rolling" in an affair that promised results in conformity to the demands of his constituents, and wherein the result could have no bearing on the fundamental principles of right and justice. He might adopt, or even invent, a political situation which would draw his opponents to his support or confound them quite; but let the matter pass over from political expediency to a point where the decision required an application of justice and the welfare of humanity, either singly or in groups, and he would cut away all extraneous matter, wherever the chips might fall, to present the elemental truth and to uphold it at all hazards.

It is hard to realize at this distant day and under the present state of Government of the United States, with its generally acknowledged conviction that negro slavery was a colossal mistake from every point of view, the passions aroused in the two decades preceding the Civil War, from the discussion of that question. The year 1837 is the culmination of the first period of Abolitionism in Illinois. The fiery protests of the few advanced liberators of New England had aroused equal passions among the advocates of slavery all along the border line. Illinois was the home of the people from both sections of the country. Emigrants from the Northern Atlantic States and emigrants from Kentucky, Virginia and the Carolinas had banked up at the confluence of the several waterways which emptied into the Mississippi. One portion of the population of this new state, and by far the larger, did not distinguish between the men who stole horses and the men who helped runaway Negroes to safety. Anti-slavery men were regarded as robbers, disturbers of the peace, encouragers of defiance to the Constitution. The few who stood opposed to this opinion were as passionately radical in their declarations concerning the slave owners. There was a large number of Conservatists who took no part in these controversies. They had no sympathy with slavery for the North, but were content to leave it as it was in the states where negro labor was thought to be the only solution to a peculiar state of society which had grown up under it.

It was not the question of man's freedom to work or not to work, that formed the initial declaration of principles which grew at last into the Emancipation, but the question of man's right to utter his opinions on any subject without molestation. The destruction of the Lovejoy printing plant and the murder of Lovejoy gave vitality to the protest against the



restrictions of free speech. This was a subject of universal appeal. It found ready response in every city and hamlet of the land. It made Lovejoy's murder an attempt upon a liberty dearest to the heart of all men. It attacked then, as it attacks today, the very seat and soul of representative government. It proposed then, as it proposes today, to cut out the tongue of Truth and to make dumb the Goddess of Justice.

Quick to see this weak point in the enemy's attack, the anti-slave forces rallied to the defence of free speech. In the face of an institution demanding mob power and the sacrifice of priceless principles, the Abolitionists performed a wholesome public service in contending that then more than ever, liberty of discussion should be protected, maintained and hallowed.

In the midst of this trembling of elemental forces presaging the mighty upheaval which was to follow, Lincoln suddenly emerges from a politician with local aims, to a statesman with the Union for a stage, and the universal rights of man for his theme. Those long hours of meditation, those continued humiliations, those years of self abnegation, those shocks of personal grief, those heart pangs for the griefs of others, all blossomed and bore fruit under the tropic heat of a whole Nation aroused to sectional hatred. Not that he was swept off his feet by the surge of that tumultuous sea of uncontrolled passion that surged over the country. He had learned in the school of experience to be master of himself. He had come a long journey from that Kentucky cabin where he was born to this Capitol of sturdy and ambitious Illinois. Not a step of that arduous way but had been hewn through the forest of difficulty. Achieving intellectual power, he had learned to conserve it. Fearful of his own wrath when aroused, he had put a net of steel about his

emotions. Seeking guidance for his own complex nature, he had found the vision that made the government of other men an action of understanding.

Now when occasion called, he was ready. The solemnity of the hour summoned heroic utterance. But it must be the utterance of reason inspired by experience, not by passion. Lincoln knew that every attempt upon the part of mankind to suppress ideals by laws or edicts of man, has been and must be a failure. He knew that the hemlock, the tower, the rack, the fagot and the cross had been proved ineffectual to still the voice of Truth. He knew that the only method which can be successfully used to combat any propaganda is the substitution of a new and better ideal. He knew that the laws which the Creator had laid upon the breast of Nature were as enduring as Nature herself; that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. He knew that if the Lovejoy murder was to be avenged, it must be through the establishment of the principle of free government, as much for the freedom of the mind as for the body; as much for the owner of the slave as for the slave.

It was no idle vaunt that had stirred him to the declaration that if ever he had a chance to strike at slavery he would hit it hard. Occasion offered. The time had come. The Legislature of which he was a member, instead of branding the murder of Lovejoy in 1837, ignored the blow thereby struck at mankind—the right of White and Black to utter their convictions—and hastened to pass resolutions of sympathy with slavery. It was Lincoln's opportunity and he embraced it bravely. He was no longer an unknown laborer of an obscure settlement. He was widely known and rapidly becoming distinguished for his services as a political leader. And with that rare insight into the heart of an event, which never

afterward failed him in any great emergency, he spoke the words that put human slavery to the test, not only of morals but of expediency.

He wrote and introduced a resolution which proclaimed his protest against the House Resolutions. Only one other man of that body signed the protest, Dan Stone, of Sangamon, and his daring in following Lincoln in his dissent will save him from the oblivion that has already enshrouded those who voted for the original resolution. The dissenting resolution, spread upon the Records of the House, was the still small voice that finally grew, until it assailed the ears of an aroused Nation:

"They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate the evil.

"They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of the District.

"The difference between these opinions and those contained in the said resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.

"DAN STONE

"A. LINCOLN

"Representatives of the County of Sangamon."

The wisdom of Lincoln was never better exemplified than in these resolutions. He laid down in the first clause the axiom dear to his heart that slavery was wrong; but with it he coupled truth no less vital to the institutions of government, that it was bad policy. Admirable reasoning, superb diplomacy! Here was "log-rolling" carried to the fourth dimen-

sion. In two words he cleared the question of slavery of all sentiment and held it up to the gaze of all practical men as a menace to their legitimate ambitions. He did not ask them to sympathize with the Negro. He asked them to consider justice and their own prosperity. And in the third clause he laid down the proposition that the Congress under the Constitution had the right to prohibit slavery in the District of Columbia and therefore in all the Territories which were likewise under its rule. It was on this interpretation of the Constitution that he afterwards defeated Douglas, in their great debates. It was on this principle that he finally issued the Proclamation of Emancipation, abolishing slavery.

Such was the mind of Lincoln when he was twenty-eight; a Daniel come to judgment. Well were it for the Nation today could we see with his eyes, hear with his ears and enter into his understanding.

It is typical of Lincoln that he kept close to the people, during that troubled period of their transformation from a loosely connected settlement of pioneers breaking up a virgin soil and forming the foundations of a State. The visions of an Illinois netted with railroads and intersected by waterways, by which the rapidly increasing products should find ready transportation to the markets of the world, premature as they were, held first place in the minds and hearts of the citizenry of that day, and they have found their culmination in the achievements of the present hour. He espoused them with the enthusiasm of youth and the measureless hopes of manhood. If sober meditations brought doubt as to the wisdom of drawing lavishly on the future for financial means with which to inaugurate projects colossal for their day and generation, his belief in the vigor of the people *en masse* and his knowledge of the inexhaustible riches of the soil, dispelled



them. Besides, there was in the very fibres of his nature a strain of determination which forced him to keep his station on a present footing, no matter how unsubstantial and precarious, until he had thrown out another foundation to which he might advance with greater security.

But amid the turmoils of local and state politics, while standing shoulder to shoulder with his colleagues for party measures, and daily gaining a more important and definite place in the estimation of the people through subscribing to their hopes and ambitions, he used his natural gifts of wit and drollery, as well as his growing powers of argument and declamation, to secure for them the things which loomed largest in their speculations. It is not difficult to appreciate the humor he was in when, beset by the numerous difficulties of making his political necessities square with his innate sense of righteousness, he declared that "honest statesmanship is the employment of individual meanness to the public good." But "in a larger sense" he saw the elements at white heat moving underneath the as yet barely troubled surface of the Nation's thought, and was already selecting his weapon and choosing his ground for action when the trumpet call should come.

It was now the period of unrest marked by outbreaks of mob law which might well have shocked the order-loving Lincoln. It was pictured by Lovejoy himself just before his murder. Commenting on the murder of the mulatto, McIntosh, Lovejoy says:

"In Charleston it burns a Convent over the head of defenseless women; in Baltimore it desecrates the Sabbath and works all day in demolishing a private citizen's house; in Vicksburg it hangs up gamblers, three or four in a row; and in St. Louis it forces a man—a hardened wretch, certainly, and one that

deserved to die—it forces him from beneath the aegis of our Constitution and laws, hurries him to the stake and burns him alive.”

That the reports of these outrages stirred Lincoln to the depths of his being is evident in the formal address he delivered in the Fall of 1839 before the Young Men’s Lyceum at Springfield, Illinois. When compared with that of anything he afterward attempted, the style is ornate and overly fanciful, but stripped of its adornments, it reveals the same frame work and structure on which all his conclusions were based.

He pictured the people in peaceful possession of the fairest portion of the earth as regards extent of territory, fertility of soil and salubrity of climate. They were under a government of political institutions more essentially conducive to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any which history of former times had told. Then sweeping on to the exhibitions of mob violence which had culminated in the Lovejoy murder, he denounced the malefactions of the mobs, saying that they pervaded the country from New England to Louisiana, and alike sprang up among the pleasure-hunting masters of Southern slaves and the order-loving citizens of the land of steady habits; that this process went on from gamblers to Negroes, from Negroes to White citizens, and from these to strangers, till dead men were seen literally dangling from the boughs of trees from every roadside. He insisted that should this mob spirit be allowed to rage, the strongest bulwark of any government might effectually be broken down and destroyed through losing the attachment of the people. He contended that whenever the vicious portion of the population should be permitted with impunity to burn churches, ravage provision stores, throw printing presses into the river, shoot editors, and hang and burn obnoxious persons, this government could not last.

If this picture seems overdrawn today, the times gave warrant for it, especially as it formed the background for his argument for law and order which he hastened to add as an antidote:

“Let reverence for the law be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap; let it be taught in schools, in seminaries and in colleges; let it be written in primers, spelling books and almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in the courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the Nation, and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay of all sexes and tongues and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars \* \* \* \* \*

“When I so pressingly urge a strict observance of all the laws, let me not be understood as saying there are no bad laws, or that grievances may not arise for the redress of which no legal provisions have been made. I mean to say no such thing. But I do mean to say that although bad laws, if they exist, should be repealed as soon as possible, still, while they continue in force, for the sake of example they should be religiously observed. So also in unprovided cases. If such arise, let proper legal provision be made for them with the least possible delay, but till then, if not too intolerable, be borne with.”

Reverence for the law—that was an article of religion. And the best proof of understanding of the question of obedience to law appears in the fact that what he said concerning it then, fits quite as vitally and completely to the questions of the present hour. Whether the controversy was over a stray animal, the ownership to be established before a Justice of the Peace, or over the ownership of four million men and

women held in bondage, the principle involved appealed to Lincoln with equal importance. And on that principle he built with such pains and care that it stood finally the assault of the keenest wits, the wisest logicians, and the greatest constitutional lawyers of the Nation.

Even at this early date Lincoln had evidently set himself to conquer a style that should answer his greatest needs. He adopted a Shakespearean method of dissecting his own nature that he might find fitting terms for defining all natures. Who can doubt that like young Malcolm he found within himself the elements with which to build up this illuminating picture of Genius?

"Towering genius," he said, "disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored. It sees no distinction in adding story to story upon monuments of fame erected to the memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen."

Who can doubt that Lincoln on the threshold of his career, looking into his own heart, saw there the man he might become were he to give rein to all the surging emotions of his restive soul? Who shall doubt his horror at the picture? And who shall refuse admiration and reverence to the memory of the man who from such tremendous urgings to a selfish career was able to mould himself anew into one of the greatest of sacrificial martyrs the world has known? Here we can see him in his early manhood, with Titan power fighting and triumphing over the brute forces of his being, over his ambition, and towering to the greatness of righteous triumph.

At this time, too, the forces working at the seat of govern-



ment for the dismemberment of the Nation seem to have been revealed to him:

"Many free countries," he declared, "have lost their liberty, and ours may lose hers; but if it shall, let it be my proudest plume, not that I was the last to desert, but that I never deserted her. I know that the great volcano at Washington, aroused and directed by the evil spirit that reigns there, is belching forth the lava of political corruption in a current broad and deep, which is sweeping with frightful velocity over the whole length and breadth of the land, bidding fair to leave unscathed no green spot or living thing; while on its bosom are riding like demons on the waves of hell, the imps of that evil spirit, and fiendishly taunting all those that dare resist its destroying course with the helplessness of their effort; and, knowing this, I cannot deny that all may be swept away. Broken by it, I, too, may be; bow to it I never will.

"The probability that we may fall in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of the cause we believe to be just; it shall not deter me."

This address made a tremendous impression on his audience. The ready response of his auditors to the somewhat sophomoric heroics of the young patriot's studied periods is incontrovertible proof that they rang true to the spirit of the hour. His friends saw to it that the speech was published in the *Sangamon Journal*.

Lincoln here passed from brooding over the needs of his State to brooding over the needs of the Nation. At this momentous hour was born to him that high resolve to stand by the Nation, separate and distinct from any individual phase of its general composition. Pondering deeply upon these features of the family life which go to make moral nature of

government, such as universal suffrage, temperance, and slavery, he said that "all such questions must first find lodgment with the most enlightened souls who stamp them with their approval. In God's own time they will be organized into law and thus woven into the fabric of our institutions."

There is proof enough of Lincoln's sympathy with suffering, and his quick response to the call of distress. He detested liquor while sorrowing for the drunkard, and his settled hatred for the institution of slavery was inborn. It was not the injustice of slavery in its constitutional operation that stirred him to protest, but the attempt to override the Constitution by the extension of slavery into the Territories against the edicts of the Constitution. And much as he must have suffered in sympathy with Lovejoy and deplored his murder, it was not the crime of murder of a man, so much as the crime against the body of the State, against the fundamental principle of free speech, that brought him into the forum with eloquent protest and prophetic exclamation. He was a patriot first, holding the body of the State inviolate, and a humanitarian afterwards. And as at this time he looked at the gashes in the robe of Columbia, following the wild strokes of the mob, before he turned to soothe the wounds of the individuals or proclaim their right, so when the Nation was rent by an insurrectionary war, he saw the danger which threatened the Union before all else, and gave his tears, his sympathy, and his great powers to succor the unfortunate and the unhappy only when he had used up every power and every expedient in binding up the Nation's wounds and preparing for its future security.

Mob law shocked him out of Provincialism into Nationalism. He saw the coming danger to the State. The theme of the Great Tragedy which had its initial utterance with the

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murder of Lovejoy at Alton found its echo in his soul, which would never cease to sound until it should culminate in his own martyrdom in Washington.

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## *Chapter VIII*

# LAWYER AND LEGISLATOR

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**I**N MARCH, 1837, Lincoln was licensed to practice law. His preparation had been in harmony with all his other activities, looking toward superiority in any accomplishment. He never studied in a law office, he tells us with becoming modesty. His library had always been his armpit, his study the spot that brought him a moment's leisure. And he had no sooner acquired a bit of knowledge than he put it to the test of expression. Sometimes it was a single boon companion who heard his first phrasing of an idea he had absorbed, sometimes it was a group of the rough Clary Grove boys, sometimes it was merely a group of trees or a less responsive audience of stumps in a logged-off patch of the forest.

In New Salem he had embraced every opportunity to appear before the Justice of the Peace to argue the case for some walletless litigant whose rights had been threatened in a minor matter, and it was in this free and untrammelled practice of the art of pleading that he discovered the power of fable applied to morals, and which equipped him with that inexhaustible fund of anecdote with which he was ever fond of illustrating a point of law or revealing a principle. His theory was sound. Later in life he wrote to a student who wished instructions as to how to become a lawyer, emphasizing those virtues that needs must accompany success. His



conclusions are purely Lincolnian and reveal the man as the soul of honesty and truth. "There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest," he writes. "I say vague, because when we consider to what extent confidence and honors are reposed in and conferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears improbable that their impression of dishonesty is very distinct or vivid. Yet the impression is common, almost universal. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief. Resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave."

Lincoln formed a partnership with John T. Stuart, a comrade in the Blackhawk War, who had gained rather an extensive practice and was at the time just recovering from the effects of a Congressional race in which he had been the loser. He entered upon the practice of law in a community of pioneers hot with the passion of political strife and fearless in its expression of opinion. When arguments failed, fists were used with brutal frequency. During the heated campaign of 1838, Douglas and Stuart, candidates for Congress, Herndon tells us, fought like tigers in his father's grocery over a floor that was drenched with slops, and gave up the struggle only when both were exhausted. Then as a fitting curtain to the episode, Mr. Stuart ordered a "barrel of whiskey and wine."

In the rear end of Speed's store over which Lincoln slept, aspiring candidates for public favor gathered nightly about a big open fireplace and debated with vigor questions of the hour. Campaigns were made personal affairs. Candidates

visiting scattered homes of the settlement presented their qualifications for office and the principles of the party they represented to the household, not neglecting to make show of interest in mother and children. Wherever a crowd could be got together politicians appeared to challenge their opponents with vigor, if not with courtesy and logic.

Small wonder that Lincoln, whose love for public speaking had been fostered by practice upon every possible occasion since childhood, should have jumped immediately into this stream of debate and stirred up the waters in no mean way. If the Lincoln legends of those days glow with too much animal fire to please the ears of present day civilization, it should be remembered that he had been trained in a rough school, that his nature was fundamentally human, and that his sympathy for men rather than respect for refinements built up on social conventions, prompted the ready use of that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. He had an inexhaustible fund of humor and he used it with a free hand where it would count more in carrying his point than all the fine-spun philosophy or glittering show of sandpapered rhetoric.

Lincoln had an overweening affection for life in all its phases and did not believe anything to be gained by viewing it only on dress parade. Once when Carpenter was executing his well-known picture of the Cabinet, the subject of Shakespeare chanced to come under discussion, and Lincoln remarked that he could see no good reason for the expurgation of certain passages in the plays when they were presented, feeling that to take away any portion of the expressed life of the time in which they were written was to give a one-sided view of it and to make doubtful of being understood other characters and arguments of the play. But all his con-

temporaries join in protesting against the reports that Lincoln delighted in vulgarity for its own sake. He never told a story or used a colloquialism but he gave it a point which applied immediately and directly to the subject under discussion. As he loved men, so he loved truth, for its own sake.

If he stripped falsehood and sham of their seductive coloring by the plain application of the recital of a condensed drama which observation and experience had taught him would prove most effective in establishing a fact in place of an erroneous theory, it was because Nature had equipped him for the race he was to run with every possible addition in mind and body that should make for ultimate triumph in the one great enterprise which he was born to guide, direct, and control to its final consummation.

Lincoln's first trial of his prowess against Douglas grew out of one of the debates in Speed's store. Douglas had been upholding the principles of the Democratic Party of which he was at that time, as ever afterwards, an ardent adherent. At a heated stage of the controversy Douglas sprang up and declaring that "this store is no place to talk politics" challenged the company to public debate of the question at issue. The affair was arranged, Douglas, Calhoun, Lamborn, and Thomas representing the Democrats; Logan, Baker, Browning, and Lincoln, the Whigs. None of the speeches of the contest attracted unusual notice with the exception of Lincoln's. So deep was the impression he created that he was asked to furnish his speech to the Sangamon Journal for publication and it afterwards appeared in the columns of that paper.

In this debate he discovered the flaws in Douglas' character which led him to dodge, cover, and misrepresent facts, but with such subtlety, so much fire and impetuosity as

easily to deceive even critical observers. Free from sham, Lincoln was merciless in exposing it in others. And his method, adopted at this time in refuting Douglas, he retained and perfected for the great debate more than ten years later, the results of which had an imperishable influence on the destinies of the Nation. At this earlier meeting Lincoln said:

"Those who heard Mr. Douglas recollect that he indulged himself in a contemptuous expression of pity for me. 'Now he's got me,' thought I. But when he went on to say that five millions of the expenditure of 1838 were payments of the French indemnities, which I knew to be untrue; that five millions had been for the Post Office, which I knew to be untrue; that ten millions had been for the Maine Boundary War, which I not only knew to be untrue but supremely ridiculous also; and when I saw that he was stupid enough to hope that I would permit such groundless and audacious assertions to be unexposed;—I readily consented that, on the score both of veracity and sagacity, the audience would judge whether he or I were the more deserving of the world's contempt."

Lincoln's methods of fitting himself for legislative duties were no less characteristic and original than those he had used to prepare himself for the law. His first term in the Legislature had been similar to his practice of law before the New Salem Justice. He had studied rather than practiced the arts of legislation. He was nominated to succeed himself in 1838, and elected. At this session he received thirty-eight votes for Speaker. His successful competitor, William L. D. Ewing, the Democratic candidate, received forty-three votes. Besides retaining a place on the Finance Committee where he had served during his first term, Lincoln was assigned to the Committee on Counties. During this term he did what



he could to correct the evils that followed the liberal legislation on internal improvements in the previous session. He admitted his "share of the responsibility in the present crisis" and finally concluded that he was "no financier" after all.

No sooner had the legislature adjourned than he announced himself again as a candidate. He had been pursued and villified. His enthusiasm for the internal improvement projects and the succeeding financial disasters, gave his Democratic opponents material which they were not slow to use. But the people believed in him. It was a Presidential year and Lincoln stumped the State for the Whigs and their candidate, Harrison—a campaign founded on the coon-skin cap, the log cabin, and the humble life of the nominee, which had many of the features and something of the defamatory characteristics which were to emphasize his own election to the Presidency, then little more than a decade away. He was selected as an elector on the Harrison ticket for President. In debate he frequently met Douglas, who was already the standard bearer and leading exponent of the Democratic principles. Neither was adverse to a conflict. After one of these meetings with the Little Giant he was greatly cast down, feeling that he had been worsted.

"He was very sensitive," John Gillespie, one of his colleagues on the stump, relates, "where he thought he had failed to meet the expectations of his friends. He was conscious of his failure, and I never saw any man so much distressed. He begged to be permitted to try again, and was reluctantly indulged: and in the next effort he transcended our highest expectations. I never heard and never expect to hear such a triumphant vindication as he then gave to Whig measures or policy. He never after, to my knowledge fell below himself."

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## *Chapter IX*

# INFLUENCE OF MARY TODD

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THE CAPITAL of Illinois in 1839 was a a very lively, if a somewhat "rough and ready" city. The buildings made little pretensions to architecture. Unpaved streets were cut deed with ruts and during muddy weather were almost impassable. The population was composed of immigrants from Eastern and Southern States; New England and Georgia "swapped" dialects to the enrichment of expression, but to the slaughter of the King's English. There were as many brands of politics as there were gradations of sentiment between the State of Maine and the Carolinas. The city and all the country round was continually stirred up with "ideas," promising the settlement of conflicting questions, State and National. Where two or three were gathered together there was sure to be controversial discussion, if not hot words and ready blows.

Thus the public life of the community, while lacking in social refinements, found an outlet for its speculations and emotions in a limited vocabulary more or less vulgar and profane: and its entertainment, in horse racing, cock fighting and feats of physical strength and skill. But the social side of Springfield had its degrees of caste, and there was as much show of aristocracy among the descendants of old families there, as at the National Capital. Statesman and

back-country ruffian might rub elbows over the same bar, while they discussed politics or recounted their adventures, with no thought of impropriety; but once the main street was left behind and the region of homes approached, the pride of ancestry and the daintier sense that culture brings, put up a strong, if invisible barrier against the leveling process which is a principal feature among the males of frontier life. Neither there nor anywhere else has womankind ever agreed to Kipling's dictum that,

The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady

Are sisters under the skin . . .

Springfield had its "select circles," into which were admitted none but those upon whom the goddess of respectability had set her distinguishing seal. Fashion looked with as withering scorn upon those who were too poor or too ignorant to follow her decrees in the Capital of Illinois, as she did in New York or London.

Into this wild, rough prairie town came Miss Mary Todd, nineteen years of age, handsome, piquant, aristocratic, with ready wit, sustained by four years of study in the French school of Mme. Martelli. She came to make her home with her sister, Mrs. Ninan Edwards, whose husband was a rising politician, already in the Legislature and one of the "Long Nine" to which Lincoln belonged, and which had proved powerful enough to capture the Capital for Springfield against all odds. Miss Todd was a Kentuckian, a member of an old and distinguished family. Her family connections, her natural charms of person, her education and refinement, as well as her own delight in social intercourse, soon gave her first place in society circles. Her suitors were as many as she chose to encourage. Among them was Lincoln. Notwithstanding the pronounced differences in their natures, as well

as in birth and breeding, Miss Todd seems from the first to have recognized Lincoln's intellectual superiority, to have encouraged him above all others. Lincoln proposed for her hand and was accepted. Then, with that strange urge of nature which prompts every woman to try her power over the man she has chosen for her mate, Miss Todd divided her smiles and accepted the cavalier attentions of Lincoln's rivals, among them Douglas. A quarrel followed and the engagement was broken.

This brought on another of those periods of melancholy to which Lincoln was subject, and during which he gave himself up to introspection of the most searching kind. There is little evidence to substantiate the conclusions of some biographers, that Lincoln's dejection was as pronounced as that which controlled him during those months following the death of Ann Rutledge. He does not seem to doubt that a proposal on his part for a renewal of the engagement would have been acceptable to Miss Todd. His speculations, revealed in letters written to Speed at this time, are those of a mystic who would peer into the future and make sure an act of such moment as this contemplated, would not prove an obstacle to the still unrevealed work he felt himself called to do and for which he was making continual preparation.

The mood was not unusual to Lincoln. Before every important step he was called upon to make, he may be found retiring into the closet of his soul, there to try conclusions with his hopes, his ambitions, his feelings, before the bar of Wisdom. Questions which men of smaller minds would have decided upon the instant caused Lincoln weeks and sometimes months of doubts so dark and deep as to arouse fears for his reason. We know now that those fears were groundless. Lincoln walked under the shadow of the wings of the



Spirit. He listened to the voice of conscience. In those great moments when his work was nearing its close and when a decision meant so much to his cause, which was ever the cause of humanity, with agonies of mind beyond the power of common men to feel, with patience which is the substance of faith, trembling but determined upon the point of action, he waited until the voice for which he listened whispered in his ear and bade him take the step. The step once taken, he went forward without question. His emotions were never so intense as to suspend his observing faculties, and his intellect was rapid enough to keep pace with them and mark their appointed course.

In a letter to Speed written during the suspension of his engagement to Miss Todd, and in which he warmly congratulates his old friend on having won the woman of his choice, he says: "I should be entirely happy but for the never-absent idea that there is one still unhappy whom I have contributed to make so. That kills my soul. I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing to be happy while she is otherwise."

Three months later in another letter to Speed, Lincoln shows himself once more speculating upon the broken engagement. Here he reveals himself, and the struggle between the practical man and the mystic, foreshadows the Lincoln of the White House, when not the fate of two persons, but of hundreds of thousands hung in the balance which he was compelled to hold. In this letter, referring to the engagement he writes:

"I must gain confidence in my own ability to keep my resolves when they are made. In that ability I once prided myself as the only chief gem of my character; that gem I lost, how and where you know too well. I have not regained it;

and until I do, *I cannot trust myself in any matter of importance.* I believe now that had you understood my case at the time as well as I understood yours afterwards, by the aid you would have given me I should have sailed through clear; but that does not now afford me sufficient confidence to begin that or the like again \* \* \* \* I always was superstitious. I believe God made me one of the instruments of bringing Fanny and you together, which union I have no doubt he had foreordained. *Whatever He designs He will do for me yet.* 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord' is my text just now."

Lincoln's mind had no tendency to neat selections so tempting to the love of order, yet often dangerous to a correct decision in questions of supreme moment. He reasoned from widely scattered events to first cause, and found his solution of every problem that engaged his faculties, within the problem itself. This passion for stripping a subject of all refinement, so that its supporting structure should appear in its primal simplicity, controlled his speculations in the field of love and marriage. He must be satisfied that his conscience would go with his action. Marriage, to his mind, carried with it supreme obligations. He seemed also to have been aware that he was somehow a child of destiny, reserved by Fate for a mission, the purpose of which he was as yet ignorant, but for which he was being intelligently prepared.

During the estrangement of which he wrote to Speed, and for some months afterward while the couple were preparing to renew the engagement, ghostly apparitions brought days of doubt and despair. But when the matter was finally decided and the marriage was being arranged, he put all speculation behind him. Providence had given him another help and stay against the coming deluge. The vivacious Mary Todd became the home-making Mary Lincoln.

She took upon herself to see that her absent-minded spouse should suffer as little from those periods of abstraction as possible. She kept his home for him. She saw that he had his meals regularly; that he was properly nourished physically; that he was free to pursue his studies; and that neither his friends nor his enemies should lead him into doing anything that would be likely to mar his future. For Mary Lincoln also had her premonitions. She had heard a whisper in her girlhood that she was to be the wife of the President of the United States. She recognized before any one else that Abraham Lincoln had the qualities of universal greatness. She was ambitious for his personal honor, as it was just and right that she should be. He was ambitious only for a Cause, and he realized that somehow he was better fitted to present the issues of that Cause than any person who had so far appeared in the arena during the preliminary contests, then being staged, and which were destined to lead to the great trial between Good and Evil that should force the world to stand still and tremble for the outcome.

Henry B. Rankin in his "Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," gives this lively portrait of Mrs. Lincoln as he knew her: "In personal appearance," he says, "Mrs. Lincoln was not strikingly commanding, nor was she considered handsome. On seeing her for the first time, one would be drawn to closer inspection by something in her features which, though not strictly of a regular or beautiful type, were yet pretty when viewed in connection with her complexion, her soft brown hair, and her clear brown eyes that seemed to penetrate to the very soul as she fixed them steadily upon you while speaking. Her husband and she were alike in one particular. Having once met and conversed with either, one would never forget the impression made. Neither was a conventional type.

"Mrs. Lincoln had a plump rounded figure, and was rather short in stature. Physically, mentally, emotionally she was the extreme opposite of Mr. Lincoln. She was exceedingly sensitive. Her impulsiveness of thought and speech had no need of restraint because her face was always an unerring index and reflection of her passing emotions, even if she had not expressed them in words. She thought quickly, spoke rapidly; and the expression of her face was always in harmony with her words. At times of deep feeling her words might bring keen pain to persons toward whom she felt kindly \* \* \* Always and everywhere she showed her refinement and dignity of character, entirely free from affectation or the putting on of manners for special occasions."

Speaking of the estrangement and Lincoln's depression during that time, Mr. Rankin says that it was probably aggravated by the opposition of Miss Todd's relatives to their marriage, and by the breaking off of the engagement. This hardly covers the case, because Lincoln's own words to Speed are direct on this subject. It was Lincoln who broke the engagement and he evidently felt that Miss Todd was suffering keenly because of their estrangement, for he accuses himself of being the cause of her suffering. No doubt Lincoln was sensitive to the reflections of Miss Todd's family on his humble parentage and poverty as a barrier to their marriage. In view of this he felt it to be his duty to all parties concerned at that time to release her from her promise. This he had done. However, when time had cleared his mind of the doubts which ever lay in wait to caution him upon the threshold of any great action, he seems to have considered whatever objections her family may have raised as trivial. At least they did not stand in the way of his marriage. Nor can the wisdom of this step be doubted, for Mary Todd gave her husband



her whole heart. Henry C. Whitney pays her this sublime tribute:

"To him she bore four children; with him she sat by the death-bed and stood by the graves of two of them. She rejoiced with him in his successes, she consoled with him in his defeats; and whenever she saw an opportunity for his advancement, she stimulated his ambition to compete for it. They were *en rapport* in all the higher objects of being; when he was nominated for President his first act was to go home and in person break the glad tidings to her. That the Nation is largely indebted to Mary Todd Lincoln for its autonomy, I do not doubt; to the full measure thereof, only God can know."

His threatened duel with Shields has sometimes been emphasized as having a bearing upon Lincoln's courtship and marriage with Mary Todd. There is nothing in the plain records of the affair that could connect it in any vital way with this important event. The challenge which James Shields issued grew out of a satirical contribution which Lincoln made to the Sangamon Journal; but aside from the internal evidence in that paper of Lincoln's powers as a literary humorist, had he been inclined to devote his energies to that field of art, and his firm stand against being coerced by threats in Shields' challenge, which was in harmony with Lincoln's character as time developed it, the duel incident is no more than a side light on the spirit of the times. Shields, who was a Democratic state official and also a man who prided himself on his reputation for chivalry and gallantry, demanded of Lincoln a "full, positive and absolute retraction of all offensive allusions used by you in these communications, in relation to my private character and standing as a man, and an apology for the insults conveyed in them. This

may prevent consequences which no one will regret more than myself."

Mr. Lincoln's reply to this communication delivered through General Whiteside who was acting for Shields is characteristic:

"Fremont, September 17, 1842.

"Jas. Shield, Esq., Your note of today was handed me by General Whiteside. In that note you say you have been informed, through the medium of the editor of the Journal, that I am the author of certain articles which you deem personally abusive of you; and, without stopping to inquire whether I am really the author, or to point out what is offensive in them, you demand an unqualified retraction of all that is offensive, and then proceed to hint at consequences.

"Now, Sir, there is in this so much assumption of facts, and so much of menace as to consequences, that I cannot submit to answer that note any further than I have, and to add that the consequences to which I suppose you allude would be a matter of as great regret to me as it possibly could to you.

"Respectfully,

A. LINCOLN"

There was much friendly interference and great pressure was brought to bear upon Lincoln to confer with Shields further on the matter, but Lincoln stood his ground on the question of "menace" and would listen to no suggestion of compromise or explanation until Shields had himself withdrawn his threats and stated with accuracy his grounds for complaint. This Shields finally did and the affair was dropped. Notwithstanding the situation which for a time seemed to threaten tragic results, there was a humorous feature introduced by Lincoln in his legitimate choice of

weapons and grounds, the weapons being cavalry broadswords and the distance being three paces on either side, a plank separating the combatants, over which neither was to cross without forfeiture of his life, and an added distance of the length of the broadswords. Lincoln stated boldly that he was opposed to dueling under any circumstances and the terms were so suggestive of his bent for the ludicrous, so altogether unusual, as to force entrance into the dispute of comment that could not but put a burlesque complexion on the whole affair.

The feature of this episode which remains permanent is Lincoln's determined stand against accepting any suggestion of menace, and his willingness, when the menacing suggestion was withdrawn, to make explanation. But even so, the matter served the gossips for many years and Herndon is authority for Lincoln's statement to him years afterward that "I did not intend to hurt Shields unless I did so clearly in self-defense. If it had been necessary I could have split him from the crown of his head to the end of his backbone." And Herndon adds, "When one takes into consideration the conditions of the weapons and position required in his instructions to Dr. Merryman, the boast does not seem impossible."

The marriage of Lincoln in no way diminished his love for politics; in fact, it stimulated his zeal in that direction. He had gained the ear of his public and now embraced every opportunity that offered for public discussion of the question of the day. Early in the year 1842 he delivered a carefully prepared lecture on temperance, in the Presbyterian Church in Springfield, which discovered such broad sympathies for the inebriate and such sharp rebuke to professed Christians who stood aloof from them, as to arouse considerable feeling among those who listened to him. Lincoln often said that he

hated liquor but sympathized with those who became victims of its power. Speaking of certain Christians who objected to the association of drunkards, even with the chance of reforming them, he said:

“If they (the Christians) believe, as they profess, that Omnipotence condescended to take on Himself the form of sinful man, and as such die an ignominious death, surely they will not refuse submission to the infinitely lesser condescension for the temporal and perhaps eternal salvation of a large and erring and unfortunate class of their fellow-creatures. Nor is the condescension very great. In my judgment such of us as have never fallen victims have been spared more from the absence of appetite than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have. Indeed, I believe if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class.”

It hardly seems possible that such a broad sympathy and clear understanding of human nature, proclaimed at such a time and with such apparent sincerity from the best of motives, could result in anything but conviction. But the effect was otherwise. This utterance cost Lincoln dear enough. It turned numbers of church people against him, saying that in his opening statement he had cast a doubt upon their professions. Lincoln was only giving publicity to the great sympathy he had for men in all conditions of life and under all circumstances, and proclaiming for the drunkard at that time the same feeling of brotherhood and the same hope which he proclaimed in later years to the unfortunate of another Race and Color. He was no man for the second-hand errors of indolent or imitative intellects. His was a searching, copious and original mind. Time wrought no revolution, no change



in his habits and feelings. All that he had been, he continued to be; all that he had done, he continued to do. Their operation was one of pure addition.

Lincoln was now associated in law with Stephen T. Logan, a man of fine legal attainments, his former partner, Stuart, having gone to Congress. Logan was a man of method and Lincoln caught from him a desire for more thoroughness in the details of his profession, setting himself to order his work with system and exactitude. The latter quality he persevered in and retained to the day of his death. The former he used as a tool when it suited his purpose. But he could never bring himself to consider time otherwise than a medium for inspirational effort. He used time as he used clothes, to move about in but not to be ordered after any definite pattern. His pre-vision was too clear to allow him to plod along any beaten path, either setting rules for acquiring knowledge or presenting the fruits of knowledge for necessary ends. He threw aside all the refinements of logic as he threw aside his coat when it was in his way, and probed straight to the heart of any matter he might have in hand. He liked best to bring the meat of his argument to light by an apt story or homely fable. He rejoiced in life and the utterance of it. He sought to convince the whole man—head, heart, and spirit. He cared more to be convincing than brilliant. In law he searched for the elemental qualities, and in politics his methods were the same. His sense of humor was contagious. Even at this early stage of his career he could gather a crowd of a hundred or more upon the street and set them all off into roars of laughter, with no apparent exhaustion of his store of wit and humor.

We cannot account for Lincoln without considering him the result of a Cause. The impulse which preceded his

thought was the urge of his time, and took its form and expression from his environment, moderated certainly by his individual genius. Records of all ages which have possessed the qualities of permanence are of themselves proof of this opinion. Shakespeare's declaration that the purpose of dramatic art is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," is not a bit of fine rhetoric but a deep conviction born of his own experience. With supreme poetical power the dramatist had so often transported himself to other times and other countries, had lived with Roman Senators, had laughed and wept with romantic Venetians, been a Briton at the several periods of England's history, from the mythological period of "Lear" to the latest of his historical plays, and had so often felt in his audience the response to his ideas when they were true to "the very age and body of the time," that he spoke directly out of his own acquired knowledge, as well as with the inspiration of genius.

That is the nature of the poet. More than any other author Shakespeare functioned upon the very borderland of creation. His ideas fledged and feathered and plumed themselves in the nests he built for them, and ventured forth to try conclusions with the nature of which they were a part. Lincoln was not born to create but to preserve. His mission was to preserve the Union. His theatre was not a Globe Theatre built by the hand of man, but the great Illinois Prairies, and later the whole United States. Yet he was no less responsive to the environment in which he moved for the perfection of his work, than was Shakespeare.

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## *Chapter X*

# APOSTLE OF DEMOCRACY

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IT IS SAFE to say that a sympathetic reading of the best literature of any period of the world's history will reproduce its "age and body" in the mind of the reader, no matter in what field of speculation the writer may have worked. In a broad way Nature remains always harmonious. No American Beauty Roses have been discovered among the effects of the cave dweller of the Stone Age. The rosy-cheeked apple of the twentieth century would have been out of keeping with the man of that time. The sour little crab and the small almost colorless flower have kept pace with man, and the cultured woman and the studious philosopher sit down to a table covered with spotless linen with the splendid apple and the beautiful rose to respond to their refined sense of the beautiful.

The Illinois of Lincoln's day and that of ours have almost as radical differences of complexion as those here noted between the ages of man. Lincoln, himself, was a product of the soil, a wilderness child, and the road he had come from babyhood in the forest of Kentucky to the Capital of a rapidly developing state was ages long in experience and one which Lincoln must have appreciated, for we find him before he has reached the age of thirty referring to himself as old, and a little later to "these old eyes of mine." His quick response to

the life about him, and the simplicity of nature which kept him in dress, manners, and speech like one made in the image and likeness of his time and place, gave him unequaled susceptibility to the feelings of his fellows, and that God-like power to present principles and produce convictions in the minds of the wild, the uncultured and the ignorant.

In 1843 Lincoln made another change of partners, this time selecting William H. Herndon, a man considerably younger than himself but of studious habits and with a growing love of literature. This was because Judge Logan had political aspirations similar to those of Lincoln, as that year they were both candidates for the nomination to Congress. Herndon gives this intimate picture of the formation of his partnership with Lincoln, a partnership which continued without any break as long as Lincoln lived.

"Lincoln came rushing into my office quarters one morning and with more or less agitation told me he had determined to sever the partnership with Logan. I confess I was surprised when he invited me to become his partner. I was young in the practice and was painfully aware of my want of ability and experience; but when he remarked in his earnest, honest way, 'Billy, I can trust you if you can trust me,' I felt relieved, and accepted his generous proposal. It has always been a matter of pride with me that during our long partnership, continuing on until dissolved by the bullet of the assassin, we never had any personal controversy or disagreement."

Lincoln's efforts to obtain the congressional nomination in 1843 brought out several unique and amusing incidents. He and Edward D. Baker were the Sangamon County aspirants. Baker's long residence, extensive acquaintance, and general popularity served him well in the campaign and at the last moment Lincoln reluctantly withdrew from the field. He



gives the following account of the situation in a letter to Speed, of date March 24, 1843:

"We had a meeting of the Whigs of the County here last Monday to appoint delegates to the District Convention, and Baker beat me and got the delegation instructed to go for him. The meeting, in spite of my attempt to decline it, appointed me one of the delegates, so that in getting Baker nominated I shall be fixed a good deal like the fellow who is made groomsman to a man that has cut him out and is marrying his own dear gal."

The balm for all his wounds Lincoln found in humorous comparisons. A letter at this time to another friend reveals the careful study Lincoln made of his political campaigns and assembles the elements which contributed to the results. The fairness displayed and the utter absence of any feeling of bitterness, or what politicians call revenge, is as apparent here as in those sublime Inaugural Addresses which he afterward gave to the world:

"It is truly gratifying to me to learn that while the people of Sangamon have cast me off, my old friends of Menard, who have known me the longest and best, stick to me. It would astonish if not amuse the older citizens to learn that I (a strange, friendless, uneducated, penniless boy, working on a flat-boat at ten dollars per month) have been put down here as a candidate of pride, wealth, and aristocratic family distinction. Yet so, chiefly, it was. There was, too, the strangest combination of church influence against me. Baker is a Campbellite and therefore, I suppose, with few exceptions got all that church. My wife has some relations in the Presbyterian Churches and some with the Episcopalian Churches, and therefore, wherever it would tell, I was set down as either one or the other, while it was everywhere contended

that no Christian ought to go for me because I belonged to no church, was suspected of being a Deist, and talked about fighting a duel. With all these things Baker, of course, had nothing to do; nor do I complain of them. As to his own Church going for him I think that was right enough; and as to the influences I have spoken of in the others, though they were very strong, it would be grossly unjust to charge that they acted upon them in a body or were very near so. I only mean that those influences levied a tax of considerable per cent throughout the religious controversy."

Neither Baker nor Lincoln obtained the coveted honor, the Convention, which was held soon after in Pekin, picking another man. Lincoln bore this defeat with manful magnanimity. The only feature of it to which he made protest after the Convention was the charge of his so-called "aristocratic family distinction." To his friend, James Mathaney, a few days later he protested "vehemently and with great emphasis" that he was anything but aristocratic and proud.

"Why, Jim," he said, "I am now and always shall be the same Abe Lincoln I was when you first saw me."

In the campaign of 1844 Lincoln was a Presidential Elector and stumped the State for Clay. The defeat of the gallant and magnetic statesman by Polk was a terrific blow to his followers. Men were never before so enlisted in any man's cause and when the great Whig chieftain went down, his followers suffered utter demoralization. It was thought by many to pre-  
sage the end of popular government. But in the struggle Lincoln's power as a debater had been developed, his acquaintance favorably broadened, and in all political deliberations his influence was considered. In 1846 he was the unanimous choice of the Convention for Congress, Logan having withdrawn in favor of his old law partner. Peter Cartwright, the

famous Methodist divine, was his Democratic opponent, and a formidable adversary. The campaign was bitterly contested and the charges previously made against Lincoln as a non-believer were forced to the front. Lincoln refused to debate the question of religion, declaring privately that it had no place in the controversy. He trusted to the fairness of the people's judgment on a question of personal belief, and made his appeal on the questions of the day. He was elected by a flattering majority and went to Washington to accumulate further knowledge in legislative matters and to make the acquaintance of men of ability and force in the Nation.

In Congress Lincoln openly opposed the President on the Mexican War and introduced the famous "Spot Resolutions" by which he was enabled to interrogate the President as to the principles he espoused in that adventure. However, when war was declared, he stood by the Government in voting supplies for the troops; but he did not retire from his position that the President's invasion of foreign soil was unconstitutional. On February 15, 1848, he wrote to Herndon:

"The provision of the Constitution giving the war-making power to Congress was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons: Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This our Convention understood to be the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us. But your view, i.e., 'that the President of the United States is the Commander of the Army and Navy; that as such Commander it is his duty, in the absence of Congress, if the country was about to be invaded and armies were organized in Mexico for that purpose, to—if

necessary—go into the very heart of Mexico and prevent invasion,' destroys the whole matter, and places our President where kings have always stood."

It has been argued many times since, that Lincoln in his Emancipation Proclamation exercised the right he here so plainly condemns, but that argument is erroneous because the President did not declare war or override the Constitution in that act. The Constitution provides that the President being Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, in *time of war* may use that power in any way necessary for the successful prosecution of that war. Lincoln freed the slaves as a measure of necessity *during the war*, and did not use his prerogative as a means of freeing them in times of peace.

In June of that year Lincoln was a delegate to the Whig Convention which met in Philadelphia and nominated General Taylor for President. He thought the nomination a wise one and predicted the election of "Old Rough" in a letter as follows: "In my opinion we shall have a most overwhelming and glorious triumph. One unmistakable sign is that all the odds and ends are with us—barn-burners, native Americans, Tyler men, disappointed office-seeking locofocos, and the Lord knows what not \* \* \* Taylor's nomination takes the locos on the blind side. It turns the war thunder against them. The war is now the gallows of Haman, which they have built for us and on which they're doomed to be hanged themselves."

Lincoln was fast learning to judge the pulse of the Nation. His letters at this time reveal a keen political mind. As in a wrestling bout he had practiced to take advantage of all "holds" and thought it right to use all his strength at the proper moment to overthrow his opponent, so in politics he approached a contest with all his senses alert and his whole



being ready for every advantage. In either case, however, he shunned any advantage that might be gained by crookedness. Always he fought a good fight, while he kept the faith. Let the search be where it will among the voluminous records gathered with patience in every available quarter by lovers of Lincoln, as well as critics, and there cannot be found one instance where he ever acted or counseled political dishonesty. Direct in attack, terrific in battle, generous in conquest, and just in defeat, he made his way from poverty to the Presidency, every step a contest with superior forces, every advance a fight against terrific odds, and always an honest man.

In the lists for political honors he was generally pitted against men who had already won the favor of the public, and who were made favorites and set down to win from the start. He defeated the champion of the Democratic Party decisively, and in turn defeated the champions of his own Party, men who had been head and front of the very movement he espoused. But out of all those struggles and fierce contests for distinction, he came with clean hands. His blows cut deep, but left no cankering sores, only honorable scars. His logic triumphed, but only to advance the learning of his opponents. His wisdom revealed the erroneous position of the opposing forces, while at the same time it shone like a kindly sun to make the devastated ground again fertile and productive. Formidable as an antagonist, he was equally generous as a conqueror. The great humanity of the man made it impossible for those whom he directly opposed to refuse their admiration, even when they were beaten; and all along the path of his advancement stood the ambitious and honorably defeated, as Douglas stood at his first inauguration, proud humbly to serve where they had thought to rule.

This is history's challenge to those who would class Lincoln

with scheming politicians and deny him the first order of statesmanship. He conquered his enemies head and heart, and Destiny, for the instrument of his taking off, was forced to go outside the realm of those active in the great political drama, North and South, and employ an instrument removed from either and schooled in the phenomena of passion, to consummate the mighty tragedy.

We are far ahead of the chronological record but the view we are taking of this man is not one that can be measured by years nor by single events. The weight of all those years he passed on earth he, himself, seems to have felt at every point of his advance. Twice during his stay in Congress he refers to himself as old. In his letter to Herndon telling of the effect upon him by a speech made by Stephens, of Georgia, he writes almost subconsciously, "My old, withered, dry eyes are full of tears yet."

Again a few days later to the same correspondent, he declares, "I am now one of the old men."

The often expressed sentiment of those plain people who knew him from boyhood that "Lincoln never seemed to be young from a child," seems in the light of his own unstudied words to have been a reflection of his own primal knowledge of himself. It calls to mind Emerson's transcendent phrase in his letter to Walt Whitman, after reading the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start."

Lincoln was like Nature, revealing himself so freely, so generously, so fully and with such universal acceptance, that he eludes any attempt to classify him either in character or time. Boswell has made Dr. Johnson one of the best known personalities; Lincoln made himself the best known indivi-

dual in the annals of time. Johnson with all his seeming candor never drew aside the veil of his soul; Lincoln opened the door to his inner temple for all the world to see.

Lincoln returned to Springfield from his one term in Congress and did his best to elect his old mentor and law partner, Judge Logan, to the seat. Logan was defeated. The Whig Party was disintegrating and the new Republican Party, that was destined to play its mighty part in the Nation, was putting off its swaddling clothes. Lincoln, who was soon to captain the Ship of State upon its voyage of discovery into hitherto unexplored regions of human affairs, discouraged any suggestions of his running for office, and gave himself up to the study of the great problem of the extension of slavery now overshadowing the country with its dark wings. On his way home from Washington, following the adjournment of Congress, he had gone through New York and some of the New England States making a number of speeches for Taylor. The impression he created was one of respect for his clear logic and an evident appreciation of his humor. But the people there, used to forensic fire and figure, stately periods and philosophical conclusions, were illy prepared to follow so strange and new a presentation of facts; and reporters, to whom the Alleghanies were the boundary line of civilization in the Western Hemisphere, ambitious to excel in caricature, dwelt at great length on his odd personality to the exclusion of the vital matter of his speeches. Nevertheless, he made a pronounced impression, hardly recognized at the time, but of such vigorous seed that the harvest a few years later gave returns a hundred fold.

That Lincoln was already deeply pondering the slave question is made evident by his remark to Seward following a meeting at Tremont Temple, Boston, where he had listened

with rapt attention to the New England statesman. That evening while they were together as fellow lodgers at a hotel, Lincoln said, "Governor Seward, I have been thinking about what you said in your speech. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question and got to give more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing."

Lincoln returned to Illinois and devoted himself to the practice of law as a means of making money—

"Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Nor for a trained attendant,  
But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent."

As he had used the ax, the flatboat, the country store, surveying, so he used the law, as a means to an end, and that end, the culture of his mind. As he had conquered in each of those several endeavors, so far as they were to be conquered, or had perfected himself in each so far as it served his purpose so now he set himself to conquer the law and perfect himself in it, using it sanely and justly, bringing to it a mind as dramatically logical as Æsop's, and as tenderly humane as Tom Hood's.

Lincoln had a settled horror of being in debt, either for material supplies or for political favors. If circumstances forced him to accept such obligations he was never content until he had cancelled the obligation, principal and interest. The debts incurred by the firm of Berry and Lincoln in their mercantile venture in New Salem, and for which he held himself individually responsible, he was some years in liquidating, but he finally paid them to the last farthing. His scrupulous adherence to this principle of getting out from under obligations incurred, at the earliest possible moment, helped him immensely in keeping his political slate clean, so that



when he was finally nominated for the Presidency, there was none to come forward with a just claim to patronage founded on unpaid service to him. With that keen perception of the fundamental characteristics which, possibly because their eyes are not overshadowed so much by refinements and the study of phenomena, and seek the object of their regard in the elements of feeling rather than in the discoveries of reason, ever marks their estimate of a man who stands against the horizon of great events, the people dubbed him "Honest Old Abe."

Lincoln came back from Washington basically the same but with a broader outlook. Seemingly abandoned by the Whigs for his bold stand in Congress on the Mexican War, and facing possible political obscurity, he was not soured nor cast down.

Herndon records his impressions of the change. "I could notice a difference in Lincoln's movement as a lawyer from this time forward. He had begun to realize lack of discipline, a want of mental training and method. He now began to study law in earnest. No man had greater power of application than he. Once fixing his mind on any subject, nothing could interfere with or disturb him. Frequently I would go out on the circuit with him. We stopped usually at little country inns, occupying the same bed. In most cases the beds were too short for him and his feet would hang over the foot-board, thus exposing a limited expanse of shin bone. Placing a candle on a chair at the head of the bed he would read and study for hours. I have known him to study in this position till two o'clock in the morning. Meanwhile, I and the others who chanced to occupy the same room would be safely and soundly asleep. On the circuit in this way he studied Euclid until he would with ease demonstrate all the propositions in

the six books. How he could maintain his mental equilibrium or concentrate his thoughts on an abstract mathematical proposition while Davis, Logan, Sweet, Edwards and I so industriously and volubly filled the air with our interminable snoring, was a problem none of us could solve."

But his thirst for knowledge did not dampen his love of life. The lawyers practicing with him were generally men of large attainments and legal acumen. The life of the circuit was in its human side a sort of Canterbury pilgrimage. Over half the year was spent by these lawyers in following the courts to the different counties. The homely inns were supplied with common office and bar room. Here the lawyers would gather at night to enter the lists in story-telling contests as a relief from the strenuous demands upon their wit and learning in the court room. There was no over-refinement in the progress of the tales they told. The teller proving less than human and dramatic, he was in disgrace. On the other hand, the response to a lively story or a cleverly turned epigram was immediate and hearty. Lincoln is proclaimed by all his compeers as having been the most original in conception and dramatic in delivery of any of his rivals in these imaginative jousts. His power of mimicry was of the first order. In recital he was both stage and actor. His countenance and features seemed to take part in the performance.

"As he neared the pith or point of the joke or story," said Herndon, "every vestige of seriousness disappeared from his face. His gray eyes sparkled; a smile seemed to gather up, curtain like, the corners of his mouth; his frame quivered with suppressed excitement; and when the point, or 'nub' of the story, as he called it, came, no one's laugh was heartier than his."

In later years when he was bowed under the woes of a

Union on the verge of dismemberment, those early creations of humor, with perhaps their "nubs" changed to fit the exigencies of the occasion, were often resurrected and played again their part in keeping that mighty heart from breaking.

The chronicle of those "circuit" days is rich with fables which bear the Lincoln stamp. Henry B. Rankin, a student in the office of Lincoln and Herndon, tells the following characteristic anecdote:

"Returning from off the circuit once, Lincoln said to Herndon: 'Billy, I heard a good story while I was up in the country. Judge D—— was complimenting the landlord on the excellence of his beef. "I am surprised," he said, "that you have such good beef. You must have to kill a whole critter when you want any." "Yes," said the landlord, "we never kill less than a whole critter." ' "

Rankin further gives this intimate picture of Lincoln in his law office. "Lincoln's favorite position when unraveling some knotty law point," he says, "was to stretch both of his legs at full length up in a chair in front of him. In this position, with books on a table near by and in his lap, he worked up his case. No matter how deeply interested in his work, if any one came in, he had something humorous or pleasant to say and usually wound up by telling a joke or anecdote. I have heard him relate the same story three times within as many hours to persons who came in at different periods, and every time he laughed as heartily and enjoyed it as if it were a new story. His humor was infectious. I had to laugh because I thought it funny that Mr. Lincoln enjoyed a story so repeatedly told.

"There was no order in the office at all. The firm of Lincoln and Herndon kept no books. They divided their fees without taking any receipts or making any taking any receipts or making any entries on books. One day Mr. Lincoln received

\$5,000 as a fee in a railroad case. He came in and said, 'Well, Billy, here is our fee, sit down and let me divide.' He counted out \$2,500 to his partner and gave it to him with as much nonchalance as he would have given a few cents for a paper. Cupidity had no abiding place in his nature."

It is pleasant to linger over these few years of Lincoln's life when he was free to indulge his fondness for the companionship of his associates and expend his inexhaustible fund of good humor to soften the asperities of existence or condole the sorrows of any man who, in any walk of life, seemed to be in need of sympathy or cheer. It was a season of meditation during which he browsed in the fields of experience, his own and others, while he uttered longings and desires of the human heart, got first hand from sympathy with nature. He read Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, the Bible, measuring his thoughts with theirs, and storing up without effort striking figures and metaphors whenever he found that they squared with his own study of the problems of human endeavor. He liked poems that had the complexion of melancholy wedded to the subtle charm of recollection. Oliver Wendell Holmes' "Last Leaf" appealed to him, especially the stanza beginning: "And the mossy marble rests." It was during this period that his law partner became possessed of one of the first editions of Walt Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*." Something in the connection of these two great souls, so universally sympathetic of humanity and so prophetic of universal democracy, lies deeper than our philosophy.

Rankin described Lincoln's introduction to the "Good Gray Poet's" poems, as follows: "When Walt Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*" was first published in 1855, it was placed on the office table of Herndon. It had been read by several of us and one day discussions hot and extreme had sprung up



between office students and Mr. Herndon concerning its poetic merit, in which Dr. Bateman engaged with us, having entered from his adjoining office. Later, quite a surprise occurred when we found that the Whitman poetry and our discussions had been engaging Lincoln's silent attention. After the rest of us had finished our criticism of some peculiar verses and of Whitman in general, as well as of each other's literary taste and morals in particular, and had resumed our usual duties or had departed, Lincoln, who during the criticism had been apparently in the unapproachable depths of one of his glum moods of meditative silence, took up '*Leaves of Grass*' for his first reading of it. After half an hour or more devoted to it he turned back to the first pages and, to our general surprise, began to read aloud. Other office work was discontinued by us all when he read with sympathetic emphasis verse after verse. His rendering revealed a charm of new life in Whitman's versification. Save for a few comments on some broad allusions that Lincoln suggested could have been veiled, or left out, he commended the new poet's verses for their virility, freshness, unconventional sentiments, and unique forms of expression, and claimed that Whitman gave promise of a new school of poetry."

Some years later William Douglas O'Connor, then a young journalist in Washington but later author of a masterly defense of Whitman and a scorching rebuke to Secretary of the Interior Harlan for discharging Whitman from office on account of his poems, records the following incident:

"I treasure to my latest hour," he writes, "with swelling heart and springing tears, the remembrance of Abraham Lincoln seeing him (Whitman) for the first time from the window of the East Room of the White House as he passed slowly by, and gazing at him long with that deep eye which read men,

saying in the quaint sweet tone which those who have spoken with him will remember, and with a significant emphasis which type can hardly convey, 'Well, *he* looks like a MAN.'"

Lincoln ministering in the White House to the wounds of a Nation battling for its life, and Whitman in the camps and hospitals about Washington devoting his heart and soul to the wounded of our armies—two supremely lovely souls, on their journey toward their destined goal! What further. Listen to O'Connor again in his estimate of Whitman's poetry:

"I know of nothing superior to '*Bivouac's Fitful Flame*,' '*Ashes of Soldiers*,' the '*Spirit whose Work Is Done*,' the prelude to '*Drum Taps*,' that most mournful and noble of all love songs, '*Out of the Rolling Ocean The Crowd*,' or '*Out Of The Cradle Endlessly Rocking*,' '*Elemental Drifts*,' the entire section entitled, '*Song of Myself*,' the hymn commencing '*Splendor of Falling Day*,' or the great salute to the French Revolution of '93 entitled, '*France*.' And if all these were wanting there is a poem in the volume which, if the author had never written another line, would be sufficient to place him among the chief poets of the world. I do not refer to '*Chanting The Square Deific*,' though that also would be sufficient in its incomparable breadth and grandeur of conception and execution to establish the highest poetic reputation, but the strain commemorating the death of the beloved President, commencing, 'When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed,' a poem whose rich and sacred beauty and rapture of tender religious passion, spreading aloft into the sublime, leave it unique and solitary in literature, and will make it the chosen and immortal hymn of Death forever. Emperors might elect to die could their memories be surrounded with such a Requiem, which, next to the grief and love of the

people, is the grandest and only grand funeral music poured around Lincoln's bier."

Shall we leave to chance Lincoln's recognition of Whitman as a great poet when all the world was deriding him?—to chance the passing of Whitman before the President who recognized instantly his individual nobility?—to chance the sacrifices both made for humanity and in the name of the Union?—to chance the preparation of Whitman through those four years of woeful experience among the wounded, the maimed, the dying, that he might have his soul attuned to that wonderful chant of Death? Was it chance that gave to those terrific years those two men pre-visioning universal democracy; to one of them to establish it and give his life for it, and to the other to live to sing the Apocalypse of the Religion of Democracy in his perfected "Leaves of Grass"? If this be so, then we may cast to the winds our system of logic as well as our faith in a Creator Whose Intelligence marshals the hosts of heaven and marks the fall of the sparrow.

Search through all the world and the histories of it and there will be found no other two men beside whom these two are not worthy to stand. Standing side by side there is no disparaging thought. They are Democracy.

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## *Chapter XI*

# THE HOUSE DIVIDED

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**A** HOUSE divided against itself! People saw it now for the first time. Yet it was no new thing. It had been in the Constitution from the first. A declaration of principles had been promulgated that pronounced all men to be born free, and yet later the same Constitution had accepted a proviso that allowed some men to be chattels. It had given legal sanction to ownership in men in one part of the Union and had prohibited it in another. It had put a ban on the importation of men from a foreign country to be sold as slaves, but had not made the sale of slaves born within the states illegal.

In the Constitutional Convention, it was the plan that New England was to let slavery alone, and we must remember that it was Mason of Virginia who was so enraged and so opposed to slavery, that he arose and delivered one of the most significant speeches heard in the Constitutional Convention—the more significant coming from a delegate from a state owning more than a third of all the slaves in the United States. Mason exclaimed:

“This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British merchants. The British Government constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing states, but the whole Union \* \* \*



Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich and strengthen a country. They produce the most pernicious effects upon manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of Heaven upon a country. As nations cannot be rewarded or punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities."

But a warning of awful calamity to come was not so effective with the majority, as was the desire to frame an instrument competent to establish a National Government—and which could be ratified. The compromise was completed by extending the slave importation period to twenty years, and placing a head tax on all slaves imported—and Mason refused to sign the Constitution.

The Union indivisible hid the seed of divisibility in its original organism. The house was divided against itself primarily before the architects had finished drawing the plans. The unforgivable sin had its roots in the birth of the nation. The clear-eyed fathers of the Republic saw this plainly enough and shuddered at the thought of a democracy founded on the primal law of God, a free man, yet retaining in its Constitution an acceptance of a condition which allowed one man to bind another after his own ideas of truth and justice, unsupported by, and contrary to, the "Declaration" that "all men are created equal" under the benignant smile of Life, which presupposed liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But they also shrank with horror at the prospect of Colonial anarchy. Better a Union with one flaw in its Constitution than no Union with all its attendant evils. They acknowledged the conditions which they could not square

with that ideal of perfection conceived by their genius, and so accepted the Garden of Eden, serpent and all.

Out of this small dark serpent whose narrow track was hardly observable in the profuse vegetation of the promises of that hour, grew the monster that was at the beginning of the second generation threatening to dismember the Union or swallow it entirely.

Truth compels the admission that it was the growth of slavery and the arrogance of its demands that caused the widest protest against it. Not the love of virtue but the sense of fear made it apparent to the Nation that the institution of slavery was wrong. A few great souls inspired by a love of truth and a sympathy for the oppressed were willing to tear up the bond that had given security to the Shylock monster in his demand for a pound of flesh, to risk a desecration of the Constitution rather than to agree to its provisions, which allowed the continuance of slavery, but not its extension within, nor the prosecution of the slave trade outside its borders. These were the original Abolitionists whose names are now starred in the skies of human progress, never to fade or to be effaced while men have power to lift their eyes to higher things. But the growing spirit of material prosperity, and the many and tremendous questions born of the American Revolution and demanding immediate consideration, overshadowed the slave question in the general mind. Had the slave states been content with the advantages given them by the Constitution and made no demands for wider territory, it is a matter of speculation whether the National conscience would even to this day have demanded its abolition.

Abraham Lincoln was the first to reveal the National mind to itself. To hold the mirror up to it that it might know itself.

"The house is divided," he said.

"Oh no," they cried, "it is not so! And if it is, to suggest such a thing is only to increase the passions."

Lincoln persisted, not only that the house was divided, but that it could not continue permanently in that way. One division would swallow up the other. Either the Nation would be all slave or all free.

It seems incredible in the light of the present, that in 1854, when Lincoln first gave utterance to the "divided house" prophecy, there was no one of all his associates but warned him against its use. So simple a truth applied with such precision and simplicity to the situation, one might think, would have been universally accepted on both sides of the controversy. Certainly those who were opposed to slavery extension should have grasped it, and used it in the widest possible way. But even the Free Soilers and the Whigs were afraid of the statement. It was applying the knife directly to the sore and they feared the surgeon's remedy more than they feared the disease. Or, as in the case of the Abolitionists, they were willing to cut out the diseased portion even if it took the heart of the Constitution with it.

So Lincoln stood alone, the one steady glowing fire among all the fitful conflagrations of those rebellious years. In his earliest utterances he logically (as well as humanely and divinely) freed the Negro by refusing to discuss him as a chattel and always referring to him as a man. Either a Negro was an animal, he argued, in which case there was no suggestion of slavery; or he was a man, in which case the question of the right to enslave him was equally illogical and absurd. He stripped the White Man and the Black Man and stood them up before the world demanding judgment on his primal principle of creation. From this standpoint he argued that for one of those men to enslave the other was equally

degrading to both. He forced the slave question from sophisticated refinement into the open; from its platform of property rights and climatic conditions; from its demands for efficiency in production, and from its sentimental expressions,—on one side the affection existing between the planter's family and the slaves, on the other the brutal and fiendish acts growing out of a condition which placed one human being an absolute monarch over another with the blacksnake as the final court of appeal.

It was this universal wisdom which made Lincoln the greatest figure of his time. It was this universal wisdom which so fortified his soul that when he came to lock himself in that little bare room over a grocery store in Springfield to compose his first Inaugural, he confined his selection from a list of books and authorities given him by Herndon, to Henry Clay's great Speech delivered in 1850, Andrew Jackson's Proclamation against Nullification, a copy of the Constitution, and Webster's Reply to Hayne. It is this universal wisdom that makes his utterances as vital when applied to the present social and political questions as they were when applied to the conditions, but with other phenomena as the result, during his lifetime.

The destiny that supplied Lincoln with antagonists at every stage of his career who should call forth his best efforts, physical or mental, brought into the same arena the "Little Giant," Stephen A. Douglas. Enthusiastic adherents of opposing parties, they were, for two decades or more, either actively opposed or silently watching and studying each other for the time that each felt sure would again bring them face to face, pleading for public favor. The two met first in the Illinois Legislature in 1834 when Lincoln, looking down upon the then youthful Douglas from his extreme



height, said whimsically, "He is the least man I have ever seen."

But Douglas gave Lincoln more trouble than all the other men who ever opposed him put together. From the first Douglas' advancement was continual and rapid. He became successively State's Attorney, Member of the Illinois Legislature, Registrar of the Land Office at Springfield, Secretary of State for Illinois, Judge of the Supreme Court of that State, Member of Congress and United States Senator.

Lincoln during the same period had the comparatively meager glory of four terms in the State Legislature and one in the Lower House of Congress. Douglas became the Head and Front of the National Democratic Party; Lincoln went down with the Whigs, with the defeat of Henry Clay, and found his final political home in the Republican Party when it was, as he had said of Douglas, about the least Party one could imagine. The political careers of these two men started at about the same time and place. When Lincoln entered upon his first term in the Illinois Assembly at Vandalia, he met in the lobby the shrewd little Vermonter, four years his junior, who, notwithstanding his extreme youth and briefness of residence in the West, was conducting among the members of the Legislature what proved to be a successful canvass for the office of State's Attorney for the First Judicial District. He became as pronounced in his Democracy as Lincoln was in his Whigism. On opposite sides in the next Assembly, both having been elected to the Legislature in 1836, they clashed from time to time in debate. The antagonism thus started at Vandalia was transferred to Springfield, where within a few months of each other, the young men took up their residence.

No two men could have been more utterly unlike in character. Lincoln was a worshiper of truth, Douglas delighted

in sophistry. Lincoln revelled in the humor of a situation; Douglas looked with absolute dislike upon any show of animal spirits. Lincoln was plain, awkward, homely; Douglas was smooth, urbane, polite, dignified. Both were men of superior endowments but cast in such different moulds that they found it impossible to be on the same side of any proposition. Douglas respected Lincoln's powers while he pretended to ignore them. Lincoln gave equal respect to his rival's talents but, instead of ignoring them, acknowledged them, made a study of them, and when the final test and the supreme struggle came, he knew his man so well that he was able to press his antagonist to the verge of defeat, at the moment, and place him in a position before the country which lost him the prestige won through long years of brilliant achievement, and sent him two years later to the grave, a broken hearted man.

Lincoln and Douglas had many debates during the years following their first contest in 1837. They both stumped the State during the campaign that followed. Lincoln lost no opportunity of speaking from the same platform with Douglas. In one of these debates, Lincoln charged Van Buren with having voted at the New York Constitutional Convention of 1821 for Negro suffrage with a property qualification. Douglas challenged the statement, whereupon Lincoln drew out Holland's "Life of Van Buren" and proved it. Douglas, cornered, and in a sudden fit of anger, snatched the volume from Lincoln's hand and exclaiming, "Damn such a book!" hurled it into the audience.

But Douglas had a following in the State which gradually extended to the Nation, until he was the general choice of the "Young Democrats" everywhere for the Presidency. He looked to the Southern States to complete that ambition. The

House was divided, but he did not see it. He saw the sectional differences but shrewdly figured that the people both North and South would welcome the man who should be able to compromise differences and prevent any open outbreak.

"Not only," says Alonzo Arnold in his wonderful book "*Lincoln, Master of Men*," "did he support the so-called Compromise of 1850, but he had, at the same time, solemnly reaffirmed the great Missouri Compromise itself. 'It had its origin,' Douglas said, 'in the hearts of all patriotic men who desired to preserve and perpetuate the blessings of our glorious Union—an origin akin to that of the Constitution of the United States, conceived in the same spirit of fraternal affection, and calculated to remove forever the danger which seemed to threaten, at some distant day, to sever the social bond of union. All the evidences of public opinion, at that day, seemed to indicate that this compromise had been canonized in the hearts of the American people, as a sacred thing which no hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb.'"

A few years later Douglas, himself, was guilty of that sacrilege. When the slave states had got from the Compromise all the advantages and benefits allotted to them in the compact, they struck forth swiftly at the compact itself, and Douglas, unable to face the difficulty of his position without surrender, obeyed the mandate of the controlling minds of his Party. He responded to their demands to prove his faithfulness to them by presenting his Kansas-Nebraska Bill, with its fateful amendment which declared the slavery restrictions of the Compromise "Inoperative and void."

The spirit of this bill, which annulled the clause of the Constitution which prohibited the extension of slavery into any of the Territories of the Union, aroused Lincoln as nothing before had done. He saw in it a menace to every state in the

Union. He raised his voice in strenuous opposition. Douglas felt the hot wave of indignation sweeping up from the people, and, taking advantage of the State and Congressional election, hurried home and threw himself into the campaign with all his fire and vigor. He spoke first at Chicago where Lincoln heard him. Next he appeared at Springfield where the State Agricultural Fair was being held. His speech on this occasion, like most of his utterances, was specious but attractive. A tremendous audience heard him and there were evidences of great sympathy for the speaker and his new doctrine of "squatter sovereignty." He must be answered.

The Anti-Nebraska elements, as if by common consent, assigned the task to his old antagonist, Abraham Lincoln. Douglas seems to have been informed of this fact before he had spoken. With his opening remarks the Senator said: "I will mention that it is understood by some gentlemen that Mr. Lincoln, of this city, is expected to answer me. If this is the understanding, I wish that Mr. Lincoln would step forward and let us arrange some plan upon which to carry out this discussion."

Mr. Lincoln, not being present, did not respond at the time. But on the following day, in the same place and before an equally large assembly, he replied to Senator Douglas in a well considered argument and with such clear reasoning and logic as to arouse the utmost enthusiasm among his supporters. With a single stroke of genius he cut his way direct to the heart of the question, and laid bare the sophistry of the Senator's opposition. His speech was of such a high order that it evoked the praise of even the supporters of Douglas. The Senator was so thoroughly unhorsed that he could not contain himself and made frequent interruptions which in no way disconcerted Mr. Lincoln who closed his argument with great simplicity and dignity.



Douglas was to have two hours before supper time to reply but these were used to so little purpose that he closed with a promise to resume in the evening. The audience again assembled but the "Little Giant" failed to appear. Neither did he give any explanation at that time or later for his failure to conclude his reply. Lincoln had won the first round in a match that was to continue not only through this canvass but in succeeding ones when the prize at stake would be immeasurably greater, when the audience instead of local would be a national, and when the whole country would devour their words and decide from them one of the most momentous questions of the ages.

Mr. Herndon, who was present when Lincoln delivered this speech, was greatly moved by it. He reports that Lincoln had told him previously in their office conversations, that the time was fast approaching when the social and political differences between freedom and slavery must be settled.

"One must overcome the other; postponing the struggle between them will only make it the more deadly in the end. The day of compromise has passed." Lincoln had said to him. "These two great ideas have been kept apart by the most artful means. They are like two wild beasts in sight of each other, but chained and held apart. Some day these deadly antagonists will one or the other break its bonds and then the question will be settled."

Slavery, he maintained, was a great and crying injustice, an enormous National crime. He made the observation that it was "singular that the courts would hold that a man never lost his right to his property that had been stolen from him, but that he instantly lost his right to himself if he was stolen."

"The Anti-Nebraska Speech made at this time in reply to Douglas," Mr. Herndon wrote at the time, "was the pro-

foundest in our opinion that Lincoln has made in his whole life. He felt upon his soul the truths burn which he uttered, and all present felt that he was true to his own soul. His feelings once or twice swelled within, and came near to stifling his utterance. He quivered with emotion. The whole house was still as death. He attacked the Nebraska Bill with unusual warmth and energy; and all felt that a man of strength was its enemy and that he intended to blast it if he could by strong, manly efforts. He was most successful, and the house approved the glorious triumph of truth by loud and continued huzzas. Douglas felt the sting; the animal within him was aroused, he frequently interrupted Mr. Lincoln. His friends felt that he was crushed by Lincoln's powerful argument, manly logic, and illustrations from nature around us."

In Mr. Herndon's estimate of this great speech in which Lincoln took his "first step forward" in those seven-league boots he had drawn on to pursue Douglas, the speech which he dramatically made in response to the challenge of the "Little Giant," Lincoln discovered himself to a wider field than he had yet known.

Horace White, political editor of the Chicago Evening Journal at the time and afterwards representative of the Chicago Tribune in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, gives a graphic account of the impression made upon him by this address. Writing several years later, he says:

"I occupied a front seat in the Representatives' Hall in the old State House when Lincoln began to speak. The impression made upon me by the orator was quite overpowering. I had not heard much political speaking up to that time. I have never heard anything since, either by Mr. Lincoln or by anybody, that I would put on a higher plane of oratory. All the strings that play upon the human heart and understand-

ing were touched with masterly skill and force, while beyond and above all skill was the overwhelming conviction pressed upon the audience that the speaker himself was charged with an irresistible and inspiring duty to his fellowmen. This conscientious impulse drove his arguments through the heads of his hearers down to their bosoms, where they made everlasting lodgment. I had been nurtured in the Abolitionist faith and was much more radical than Mr. Lincoln himself on any point where slavery was concerned, yet it seemed to me, when this speech was finished, as though I had had a very feeble conception of the wickedness of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. I was filled, as never before, with the sense of my own duty and responsibility as a citizen toward the aggressions of the slave power."

At Peoria a few days later, Lincoln and Douglas met again and spoke from the same platform. Again Lincoln shattered his opponent's armor and to such a degree that Douglas proposed a cessation of hostilities and that they should both go home and speak no more during the campaign. Lincoln agreed and returned to Springfield, but Douglas on his way to Chicago stopped at Princeton and violated the agreement. Lincoln put another mark against the trustworthiness of Douglas. He was getting the accurate measure of the man from whom, he already saw, the Nation had most to fear. Douglas was powerful in argument, the best debater in the Senate, and, as Lincoln discerned, was ready to admit slavery anywhere if by so doing he could gain the Presidency.

And Lincoln knew that he alone was prepared to check the redoubtable Douglas in his ambitious schemes.

During those hours of withdrawal from the world when Lincoln was fathoms deep in speculation, a mood on which none of his most intimate friends had the courage to intrude,

did he dream of himself taking the exalted place Douglas had marked as his own goal? Did he sense his destiny? Were the future woes of the Nation revealed to him? Was he already in conscious pre-vision bearing those burdens? Who shall say? Whatever he may have believed or dreamed, he kept his own counsel. But he never took his eyes from Douglas nor allowed to slip an opportunity to oppose him. Instead of attacking the Democratic Party for the unholy attempts to push slavery into the Territories, he rightly placed it at the door of Douglas.

It is difficult at this late day to realize the public state of mind in 1856-58. For the first time the terrible problem of slavery, long the secret haunt, became the open battlefield of American politics. In place of the delicate silence, usually enforced by the code of democratic politeness toward the "peculiar institution," the journals, the stumps, exhausted the resources of political eloquence in its attack and defence. The halls of Congress rang with it. The desecration of the Missouri Compromise, the Dred Scott Decision, the Nebraska Bill, the election of Van Buren, made the South arrogant. Putting aside fear, they leaped to assurance. They exchanged their dumb feint for loud audacity. Instead of attempting to stop the mouth of New England, the South preferred to speak out for itself and to cane the barehead of senatorial reply. The debate in Congress had arisen, not in concession to Northern rights, but in the service of Southern treachery and aggression—to legalize a breach of public faith and to force the stipulated limits of slavery. Steadily the encroachments on the Constitution had been made.

The original ordinance of Congress, "For the government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the Ohio," closed with the "Unalterable Article":



"There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than in punishment of crimes whereof the parties shall be duly convicted."

This article had been displaced by the Compromise of 1820 when all the country "which lies north of 36-30 North Latitude, excepting only such parts thereof as is included within the limits of the state contemplated by this Act," was proscribed to slavery, which left all the territories and new states carved out of the acquisition of Texas and New Mexico to be cultivated by slave labor. The Nebraska Bill gave the people of a territory freedom to decide whether they should enter the Union as a free or a slave state, no matter whether north of the prescribed line or not. Then came the Dred Scott Decision in which the Supreme Court made it legal for an owner of a slave state to take his slave into a free state and hold him there as his property. This brought about the "Invasion of Kansas" and gave it the name of Bloody Kansas.

Douglas was the champion of all these measures, a victim to the blindness of ambition which has wrecked the fortunes and blemished the fame of greater Americans than he. And because he was already a formidable candidate for the nomination for President, Lincoln desired his overthrow.

The Republican Organization came into existence in Illinois as a Party at Bloomington, May, 1856. The convention adopted a platform ringing with strong anti-Nebraska sentiments. "And then and there," says Herndon, "gave the Republican Party its official christening."

"The Convention having concluded its business, Lincoln, in response to repeated calls, addressed the delegates. He had prepared the speech, prepared it by two years of study and application of the great truths of existence, for the saving of the Union. Mr. Herndon tells us that, compared with all the

speeches ever delivered by Lincoln, most of which he had heard and all of which he had read, in his opinion the Bloomington Speech was the grand effort of Lincoln's life.

"Heretofore," writes this biographer, "he simply argued the slavery question on the grounds of policy,—the statesman's grounds—never reaching the question of the radical and the eternal right. Now he was newly baptized and freshly born; he had the fervor of a new convert; the smothered flame broke out; enthusiasms unusual to him blazed up; his eyes were aglow with inspiration; he felt justice; his heart was alive to the right; his sympathies, remarkably deep for him, burst forth, and he stood before the throne of Eternal Right. His speech was full of fire and energy and force; it was logic; it was pathos; it was enthusiasm; it was justice, equity, truth, and right, set ablaze by the divine fires of a soul maddened by the wrong; it was hard, heavy, knotty, gnarly, backed with wrath. I attempted for about fifteen minutes, as was usual with me then, to take notes, but at the end of that time I threw pen and paper away and lived only in the inspiration of the hour. If Mr. Lincoln was six feet four inches high usually, at Bloomington that day he was seven feet, and inspired at that. From that day to the day of his death he stood firm for the right. He felt his great cross, had his great idea, nursed it, kept it, taught it to others, in his fidelity bore witness of it to his death, and finally sealed it with his precious blood."

Three steps Lincoln had taken, three mighty seven-league steps, by the side of Senator Douglas, and already his glow of truth had cast his tall shadow over his great antagonist. The speech at Bloomington delivered in May, 1856, had so conquered the minds of reporters that their pencils rested idly in their fingers, their paper lay white and un-

marked before them. The experience detailed by Herndon was the experience of all the newspaper men, even including the editor of the Chicago Tribune, Joseph Medill, the foremost exponent of the new Republican ideas in the West. The Peoria Speech delivered in October, 1854, had been the second great step in the Lincoln advance. With his third mighty stride he placed himself in the fore of all the anti-slavery forces of the time and reached a point in the exposition of the principles of right and justice for all men which surpassed his contemporaries and which not the greatest of them was ever able to approach.

At Peoria he had said: "I particularly object to the new position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people, a sad evidence that, feeling over-prosperity, we forget right; that liberty as a principle we have ceased to revere. I object to it because the Fathers of the Republic eschewed and rejected it. The argument of 'necessity' was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery, and so far, and so far only as it carried them, did they ever go. They found the institution existing among us, which they could not help, and they cast the blame on the British King for having permitted its introduction. Thus we see the plain, unmistakable spirit of their age towards slavery was hostile to the principle and tolerant only by necessity. But now it is transformed into a sacred *right* \* \* \* \* Henceforth it is to be the chief jewel of the Nation—the very figurehead of the Ship of State. Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giving up the old for the new faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created



equal: but now from the beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a sacred right of self-government. These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon; and whoever holds to the one must despise the other \* \* \* Our Republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us purify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit if not in the blood of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of moral right, back upon its existing legal rights and its arguments of necessity. Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it, and there let it rest in peace. Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it the practices and policy which harmonize with it. Let North and South, let all Americans, let lovers of liberty everywhere, join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it as to make and to keep it forever worthy of saving."

From what exalted height does Lincoln here look down upon a troubled world? There is in this utterance the very substance of love. It is like looking into the bosom of a still deep lake wherein are mirrored the beautiful truths of nature. Nor does it lack power, nor yet the pressure of well-planned attack by an invincible force. His reference to the stand taken by the Fathers of the Republic forced Douglas to call upon those Fathers to give evidence in his behalf. And out of that despairing cry Lincoln wove that masterpiece of historical logic which distinguished his Cooper Institute Speech, the fourth great stride of his seven-league boots, taken in response to the invitation of Douglas at Springfield in 1854, to "please step forward."

Three years and six months elapsed between the Peoria Speech and the Bloomington Speech. What days of specula-



tion, what nights of brooding over that mighty question, went into the preparation of that matchless oration will never be known! Its utterance not only exposed the Iago-like character of the popular Douglas, but it stripped the clouds from the Temple of Liberty and flooded the whole inner structure with light as from the Throne of God. With one simple reference to slavery made figurative with an age-old parable, he presented the whole slavery question. With consummate art he marshalled the events leading up to the Kansas-Nebraska legislation sponsored by Douglas, analyzed its meaning and discovered its origin and progress. Such a glow shone forth from the presentation of the most familiar of these facts that old campaigners were swallowed up in it and forgot their very existence. The keynote of this speech had been in Lincoln's mind for more than four years. He had used a suggestion of the Biblical phrase in earlier efforts but was persuaded to withhold the argument lest it should wreck the hopes of his Party. But time had matured the idea. Patiently he had pondered the declaration. Heartfully he had brooded over it. Faithfully he had scanned it. Reverently he had builded and shaped it. Enough. The time had come. He thundered it forth and the world trembled.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South."

Silence fell upon that great audience. A miracle, the blind had eyes and could see. Before them yawned the gulf. Their feet were upon the verge of the awful chasm. A breath might precipitate the catastrophe. Then again the clear, calm tones of the speaker.

“What now? Have we no tendency to the latter condition? Let any one who doubts, carefully contemplate that now almost legal combination—piece of machinery, so to speak—compounded of the Nebraska doctrine and the Dred Scott Decision. Let him consider not only what work the machinery is adapted to do, and how well adapted; but also let him study the history of its construction, and trace, if he can, or rather fail, if he can, to trace the evidences of design and concert of action among its chief architects from the beginning.”

Mr. Lincoln then proceeded to discuss the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which, every candid man must acknowledge, conferred on emigrants to Kansas and Nebraska the right to carry slaves there and hold them in bondage, whereas formerly they had no such right; he alluded to the events which followed that repeal, events in which Judge Douglas' name figured prominently, explaining that he referred to the Dred Scott Decision and the extraordinary means taken to prepare the public mind for that decision; the efforts put forth by President Pierce to make people believe that, in the election of James Buchanan, they had endorsed the doctrine that slavery may exist in the free territories of the Union; the earnest exhortation put forth by President Buchanan to the people to stick to that decision whatever it might be; the close-fitting niche in the Nebraska Bill wherein the right of the people to govern themselves is made “subject to the Constitution of the United States”; the extraordinary haste made by Judge Douglas to give this decision an endorsement at the capital of Illinois.

"Auxiliary to all this, and working hand in hand with it," continued the speaker, "the Nebraska doctrine, or what is left of it, is to educate and mould public opinion, at least Northern public opinion, not to care whether slavery is voted down or voted up. This shows exactly where we now are and partially, also, where we are tending.

"It will throw additional light on the latter to go back and run the mind over the string of historical facts already stated. Several things will now appear less dark and mysterious than they did when they were transpiring. The people were to be left 'perfectly free' \* \* \* 'subject only to the Constitution.' What the Constitution had to do with it outsiders could not then see. Plainly enough now, it was an exactly fitted niche for the Dred Scott Decision to afterward come in, and declare the perfect freedom of the people to be just no freedom at all. Why was the amendment, expressly declaring the right of the people, voted down? Plainly enough now, the adoption of it would have spoiled the niche for the Dred Scott Decision. Why was the court decision held up? Why even a senator's individual opinion withheld till after the Presidential election? Plainly enough now, the speaking out then would have damaged the 'perfectly free' argument upon which the election was to be carried. Why the outgoing President's felicitation on the endorsement? Why the delay of a reargument? Why the incoming President's advance exhortation in favor of the Decision? These things look like the cautious patting and petting of the spirited horse, preparatory to mounting him, when it is dreaded that he may give the rider a fall. And why the hasty after-endorsement of the Decision by the President and others?

"We cannot absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of pre-concert. But when we see a lot of



framed timbers, different portions of which we know to have been gotten out at different times and places by different workmen—Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James, for instance—and we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly made the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortises exactly fitting, and all the lengths and proportions of the different pieces exactly adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few, not omitting the scaffolding—or if a single piece be lacking, we see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared to bring such piece in—in such case, we find it impossible not to believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common plan or draft, drawn up before the first blow was struck.”

The orator went on to show the unstable footing of Senator Douglas on his application of the Constitution to his theory of “popular sovereignty.” And being aware that a considerable faction of the Republican Party were willing to forgive Douglas his erroneous position on the slave question if he would come over to them, and that in such case the “Little Giant” might be confident of gaining his Presidential ambitions, Lincoln warned the Convention against such action.

“Senator Douglas,” he said, “holds, we know, that a man may rightfully be wiser today than he was yesterday—that he may rightfully change when he finds himself wrong. But can we, for that reason, run ahead, and infer that he will make any particular change, of which he himself has given no intimation? Can we safely base our action upon any such vague inference?

“Now, as ever, I wish not to misrepresent Judge Douglas’ position, question his motives, or do aught that can be per-



sonally offensive to him. Whenever, if ever, he and we can come together on principle, so that our great cause may have assistance from his great ability, I hope to have interposed no adventitious obstacle. But clearly, he is not now with us—he does not pretend to be—he does not promise ever to be.

“Our cause, then, must be entrusted to, and conducted by, its own undoubted friends, those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work, who do care for the results. Two years ago the Republicans of the Nation mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong. We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us. Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought the battle through, under constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud, pampered enemy. Did we brave all that, to falter now?—now, when that same enemy is wavering, dissevered, and belligerent? The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail—if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise counsel may accelerate, or mistake, delay it, but sooner or later the victory is sure to come.”

The champion of human rights had finished his training. He stood ready for action. He had become himself a challenger. His chief opponent was Douglas, also trained to every art of encounter, skilled in attack and defense, famous for a hundred battles won. Would he accept the challenge? Then would come a grapple of giants; the arena a Prairie State, the audience a Nation.—Aye, a world would witness the struggle, and hold its breath in trembling suspense while Freedom, herself, grew pale lest he who strove to the death for her sweet sake should fail and her fair temple fall to everlasting ruin.

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## *Chapter XII*

# THE GRAPPLE OF GIANTS

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LINCOLN'S bold stand taken at Springfield not only made him the logical candidate for the seat in the Senate occupied by Douglas, but it made him the people's choice to lead them out of the wilderness of conflicting opinions and passions to stability of government. At the same time it lifted Douglas to the most extreme point of opposition to those ideals. Like the sun breaking through dark clouds, Lincoln's logic shone into the darkest corners and revealed the miasma of the swamps as well as the splendor of the upper landscape.

Douglas and Lincoln at last stood face to face before the people. The Little Giant could no longer pass his antagonist by with petty compliments of his "amiable" qualities or his "intellectual attainment." Towering before him, fired with righteous indignation, dark with fierce determination, trained to the minute by a life-time devotion to principle, rugged of body as of soul, the son of the pioneer advanced upon him, champion of all the weak and downtrodden and enslaved of the world.

Lincoln knew Douglas to be an orator of winning personality, spontaneous in declamation, passionate in invective, lightning in attack, excelling in impromptu reply. He knew him to be quick to seize upon the weakness in an opponent's

argument, adroit at making the most of the strength of his own, expert in all the wiles and strategies of controversy, unscrupulous about employing them to confound an adversary or mislead his hearers, the best offhand debater in the Senate during one of its most brilliant epochs. Sumner, Seward, Chase, Everett, Crittenden, Trumbull, Fessenden, Hale, Wilson—Douglas had measured swords with them all and rarely had he retired vanquished. He had gained an almost unbroken record of forensic victories. Swollen with the pride of achievement, recognizing no will but his own, he had come to look upon opposition of any kind with ill-controlled passion. Twelve years in the Senate had led him to regard his seat as peculiarly his own. Such was the man who, in the summer of 1858, Lincoln challenged to debate for his place, not only in the Senate, but for his place as a leader in the Nation.

Lincoln did not overestimate his own abilities to grapple in a final encounter with the man he had pursued so persistently. Not long before he had made admission of how wide a gap lay between them, in a pathetic contrast, and to his own disparagement.

"Twenty-two years ago," he said, "Judge Douglas and I first became acquainted. We were both young then—he a trifle younger than I. Even then we were both ambitious—I, perhaps, quite as much as he. With me, the race of ambition has been a failure—a flat failure; with him, it has been one of splendid success. His name fills the Nation, and is not unknown in foreign lands."

Speaking on another occasion of his opponent's more dangerous qualities, Lincoln said: "It is impossible to get the advantage of him. Even if he is worsted, he so bears himself that the people are bewildered and uncertain as to who has the better of it."

The impossible, then, was what Lincoln was about to undertake.

Nor did Douglas profess to despise the prowess of the man who had "stepped" into the arena to confront him. When informed at the Capitol by a dispatch that the man who had so persistently opposed him in minor contests had been chosen to run against him for the Senate, he said to the group of Republican representatives gathered about him to hear it read, "Well, gentlemen, you have nominated a very able and honest man."

At another time he voiced a more vigorous as well as more characteristic opinion: "Of all the damned Whig rascals about Springfield, Abe Lincoln is the ablest and the most honest."

The contest could no longer be delayed. Douglas rushed from the Capital to Chicago where he made his first attack. His personal following in that city was tremendous. It was on July 9th. He was given a reception fit for an emperor. Crowds blocked the way to the station. He was driven to the Tremont House in a coach drawn by six horses. Banners, bands of music, cannon and fireworks added their various inspiration to the scene. He spoke that night from the balcony of the hotel to an immense audience. In the crowd stood Lincoln: silent, dark, imperturbable. There were other speeches over the State by both candidates. Enthusiasm was at fever heat. Douglas upheld his "popular sovereignty" dogma. Lincoln covered a much wider field, proclaiming everywhere the rights of man, but always aiming blows at Douglas as the exponent of all that was dangerous and fateful to the perpetuation of the Union.

But Lincoln's nature rebelled at this long distance sparring. He wanted close contact, to combat his skillful oppon-



ent face to face, where the blows received and delivered could be witnessed and the force of their impact judged at the moment of exchange. On the 24th of July he sent a direct challenge to Douglas for joint debate. On the 30th, Douglas finally accepted the proposition to "divide time, and address the same audiences," naming seven different places, one in each Congressional District, outside of Chicago and Springfield, for the meetings.

The places and dates were: Ottawa, August 21; Freeport, August 27; Jonesboro, September 15; Charleston, September 18; Galesburg, October 7; Quincy, October 13; and Alton, October 15.

"I agree to your suggestion," wrote Douglas, "that we shall alternately open and close the discussion. I will speak at Ottawa one hour, you can reply, occupying an hour and a half, and I will then follow for half an hour. At Freeport you shall open the discussion and speak for one hour, I will follow for an hour and a half, and you can then reply for half an hour. We will alternate in like manner in each successive place."

To this agreement Lincoln gave his consent, "Although," he wrote, "by the terms as you propose you take four openings and closes to my three."

The blows these giants gave and received can only be appreciated by a thorough study of the speeches. They drew such audiences as were never assembled before or since on such occasions. Their partisans were in a continual frenzy of passion.

"Never before nor since," says Alonzo Rothschild in his *Work on Lincoln*, "have two citizens engaged in a series of public discussions which involved questions of equal importance. Personal and purely local differences were over-

shadowed from the very beginning by what the disputants had to say on issues so momentous that they were destined, within a few years, to plunge the country into Civil War. That Lincoln felt the premonition of the coming tragedy, might be gathered from his reference to it in the Quincy debate as 'successive acts of a drama to be enacted not merely in the face of audiences like his, but in the face of the Nation, and to some extent, in the face of the world.'"

Contest memorable! Over the arena of the Illinois prairies they strove. Now Douglas appeared to prevail, now Lincoln. One page of those two hundred and sixty-three pages in which the debates have been preserved, persuades us that slavery is constitutional, and that each commonwealth should be allowed to have the "institution" or not, as it elects. Turn a leaf and we are convinced that slavery is wrong, and ought, at least, to be restricted.

Douglas began the debate by treating Lincoln in a jaunty manner, in talking down to him, patronizing him. Sometimes these personal pleasantries carried scarcely concealed sarcasm; sometimes they were merely feints to get out of corners into which the merciless logic of Lincoln had driven him. But the oftener they met the more direct were the blows delivered by Lincoln, arguing, not for himself, but for the eternal right.

Throughout their earlier debates Douglas, with the artfulness of which he knew no peer, misrepresented Lincoln's career and misstated his principles, in such a way as to put Lincoln on the defensive. In the first encounter, advantage appeared to rest with the Little Giant. But at the Ottawa meeting, the second on the schedule and where Lincoln had the closing argument, the Champion of the Republicans so beat and cornered and flayed his antagonist that when he

closed, his admirers caught him up from the platform and bore him on their shoulders to his hotel. This demonstration was not to Lincoln's liking but the crowd would not be denied, and bore him with songs and huzzas through the shouting populace.

Perhaps this expression of the hearty good will in which he was held by the people gave Lincoln new courage, for when the champions next met at Freeport, Lincoln assumed the offensive and thenceforth, to the end of the series, he frequently forced the fighting. Douglas soon learned to respect Lincoln's skill in give and take on the lower levels of argument and changed his tactics. He became at times belligerent, and losing his temper would fall upon his adversary with personalities which Lincoln was not slow to return. Then Douglas would take refuge in protesting.

At Galesburg the Senator said: "Does Mr. Lincoln wish to push these things to the point of personal difficulties here? I commenced this contest by treating him courteously and kindly; I always spoke of him in words of respect, and in return he sought, and is now seeking, to divert public attention from the enormity of his revolutionary principles by impeaching men's sincerity and integrity, and inviting personal quarrels.'

Said Lincoln in reply: "I do not understand but what he impeaches my honor, my veracity, and my candor; and because he does this, I do not understand that I am bound, if I see a truthful ground for it, to keep my hands off of him. As soon as I learned that Judge Douglas was disposed to treat me in this way, I signified in one of my speeches that I should be driven to draw upon whatever of humble resources I might have to adopt a new course with him. I was not entirely sure that I should be able to hold my own with him, but I at

least had the purpose made to do as well as I could upon him; and now I say that I will not be the first to cry, 'Hold'! I think it originated with the Judge, and when he quits, I probably will. But I shall not ask any favors at all. He asks me, or he asks the audience, if I wish to push this matter to a point of personal difficulty. I tell him, No. He did not make a mistake in one of his early speeches when he called me an 'amiable' man, though perhaps he did when he called me an 'intelligent' man. It really hurts me very much to suppose that I have wronged anybody on earth. I again tell him, No. I very much prefer, when this canvass shall be over, however it may result, that we at least part without any bitter recollections of personal difficulties. The Judge, in his concluding speech at Galesburg says that I was pushing this matter to a personal difficulty to avoid the responsibility for the enormity of my principles. I say to the Judge and this audience now, that I will again state our principles as well as I hastily can in all their enormity, and if the Judge hereafter chooses to confine himself to war upon these principles he will probably not find me departing from the same course."

Lincoln thus made plain his attitude. Assuming the justice of his position, he held it with vigor against argument or abuse, changing weapons when his adversary changed, and evincing no animosity even when he dealt the most telling strokes. But he no longer called upon his humor to lighten the argument. Urged by friends to introduce some of his witty illustrations and humorous anecdotes to gain applause, he replied that the occasion was too serious; the issues too grave.

"I do not seek applause," he said, "or to amuse the people, but to convince them."

Close as they stood, evenly matched as they appeared to



be, they were as far apart as the poles. Douglas was fighting for his own political life; for the culmination of his ambition. He had played a stupendous game and the result yet hung in the balance. Until his recent quarrel with President Buchanan, whose attempt to foist upon Kansas a state constitution by fraud, force and murder, Douglas could not follow, he had espoused without any conscious qualms those ideas of government which seemed the surest of fulfillment. He had thus kept himself at the head of a great body of citizens, North and South, whose ideals were "big business"; on one side standing for an undisturbed continuation of manufacturing with paid muscle and brawn as its foundation, on the other the undisturbed continuation of a social "institution" the profits of which were derived from the blood of slaves. He had been the foremost advocate of the legal extension of unpaid labor into the territories and the new states being formed, should the people of those territories and states vote to do it.

His great intellect, his untiring energy, his wit and his learning, were close to the first order. But underneath was the quicksand of a shifting conscience, which chameleon-like took on the complexion of expediency. In one hand he held the brief composed to defend the right of one man to own another man; in the other the proclamation that men had the right to self-government. Not a Little Giant, but a giant of Herculean proportions he must have been to have kept his place under such circumstances.

Lincoln, on the contrary, stood in no such case. His house was builded on a rock. Let the tempest rage, it would not be shaken. He had ambition, but it was noble. He desired distinction, but with the respect that should make it dear. He loved life, but it must be life linked with the hopes and aspira-

tions and successes of all men. And he stood ready to sacrifice all these rather than to accept one single fallacy, no matter how great things it might promise him.

So they stood and so they fought; one for God's truth, and the other for man's refinement on that truth. At last, coolly, calmly, determinedly, Lincoln, with one powerful blow drove his antagonist from the false foundation he had laid with such care. He had replied to seven questions prepared by Douglas. In turn he propounded four of his own. One of these was:

"Can the people of a United States Territory in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a State Constitution?"

The wisdom of this question is apparent now. But all of Lincoln's friends and backers of that time begged him not to submit it. They argued that Douglas would answer it in the affirmative to save his standing in that debate.

"Let him," was Lincoln's conclusion. "If he does it may make him Senator but he will never be President."

Douglas did answer in the affirmative. He did save his senatorial toga, but it was the man who put the question, and not the man who answered it, who was inaugurated in Washington, following the next general election. With that answer Douglas slipped off into a quagmire from which he was never able to extricate himself, strive he ever so mightily. He saved his popularity in the North for the time being, but henceforth the South would have none of him. He had to learn the full significance of Lincoln's application of the truth, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Douglas was such a house and the division of his principles brought about his ruin, just as a few years later it brought about the

ruin of all that had been so carefully and shrewdly built upon the policies he had espoused and promulgated and defended.

And the destiny that shapes our ends with inexorable justice gave to the two men the fruits of their labors—Douglas was forced to deny his policies and to proclaim those of his lifelong opponent; Lincoln was permitted to establish his policies eternally and to die for them.

Passing years bring into clearer perspective the momentous issue of that great debate. Beside the fallacies of the man ambitious for his own ends, the virtues of the man ambitious for his country and his race shine with increasing luster. Defeated, cast down from the lofty pinnacle to which he had so arduously climbed, the man ambitious for self came finally to honor the man he had patronized and to stand humbly as his willing disciple in the fierce light that beats upon the office which is the highest gift of the American people. Weak in his attempt to give the slave states a wrong by the ballot, Douglas was yet strong in denying their right to secure the same wrong by the bullet. For the sake of his memory, fate gave him one brief hour in which, with the eloquence and fire of a Cicero, he magnified the glory of the Republic and left a matchless example of his eloquence in his call to arms when the flag of the Union had been torn in the hands of the enemies of universal freedom.

And we may be sure that in the great forgiving heart of Abraham Lincoln there was only compassion for the man whose fate was so linked with his own, and who came in the end to stand with him on the great question they had debated with such power and force, to uphold the principle which he had followed to such immeasurable lengths and would follow to the tragic climax.

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## *Chapter XIII*

# FROM STATE TO NATION

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**T**HE HOUSE-DIVIDED SPEECH made Lincoln at once a national figure. The "step" that Douglas had invited him to take in Springfield four years before had developed into a swinging stride that was carrying him powerfully forward on his destined way. With his utterance, "a house divided against itself cannot stand," he had demonstrated the futility of further compromise with the evil of slavery. The inspired glow of his genius had revealed at once the Ship of State on a storm-tossed ocean and the reefs toward which she was being inevitably driven. Study and meditation appeared in clear terms and accentuated God-like calm in that great speech. In revealing the mind of the Nation, he had revealed his own.

That which properly constitutes the life of everyone is a profound secret, says Thoreau. But Lincoln at this time bravely disclosed the depths of his being. He did this with such simple dignity that everyone, everywhere, felt that he had spoken their deeper thoughts, and revealed themselves to themselves and to each other. It was that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

It has been said that the best men do not seem to go contrary to others, but, as if they could afford to travel the same way, they go a parallel but higher course, a sort of



upper road. Does not Lincoln measure up to this standard of the best? He seems never to be going contrary to the course of humanity. He seems always with it, but on a higher level, as pilot and encourager. How kindly he leads; with what compassion he views the struggles of his fellows! Study Lincoln the least little bit and he becomes at once a familiar. You feel that your entrance to the company of a great lover has stirred the love impulse in your own heart, and humanity becomes of greater moment, is nearer, and compounded of your own virtues, your own infirmities.

Attempts to refine Lincoln have been no more successful in biography than they were in his lifetime. They are like stripping the coat from the thistle to make it a cornstalk. Lincoln was thoroughly harmonious, a shellbark hickory, sturdy in his individualism. People of all stations recognized his likeness to themselves and followed him spontaneously to attempt the high and noble.

Lincoln early in life discovered that strong people were won by exhibitions of strength. From physical to mental he carried that idea with prime results. As in New Salem he had invented a harness by which he was enabled to lift nearly two thousand pounds, so in his Springfield speech he had woven a harness of logic by which he was enabled to lift the whole weight of the slavery question to the view of all the people, everywhere.

Students of the time charge to this speech, the defeat of Lincoln as a senatorial candidate. That is mere speculation born, perhaps, from a desire to argue that Lincoln might have been elected. He had unhorsed Douglas with the people, having received a majority of the popular vote, but hold-over Democratic Senators gave his opponent fifty-four votes to the Republicans' forty-six, and by a strict Party vote Douglas was returned to the Senate.

That this defeat of his high hopes was a hard blow to Lincoln cannot be disputed. He had said in the great Lincoln-Douglas Debate, "I affect no contempt for the high eminence he (Douglas) has reached. If so reached *that the oppressed of my species might have shared with me in the elevation*, I would rather stand on that eminence than wear the richest crown that ever pressed a monarch's brow."

He could not think with patience of lonely grandeur, such as that of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon. Like Pan he longed to move the baser elements in humanity to freedom and gladness. If he mounted the heights, he longed to take with him the poor slave, the robust backwoodsman, the wild, rough Clary Grove boys, as well as the more refined and favored of humanity. But his temporary defeat for the Senate was a hard blow.

When a friend, following the election of Douglas asked Lincoln how he felt about it, he replied characteristically, "I am like the boy who stubbed his toe on a root. It hurts too bad to laugh, and I am too big to cry."

When he had been warned that should he put the question of state sovereignty directly up to Douglas, he might answer it in a way that would result in his being returned to the Senate, Lincoln said: "I am after bigger game. The election of 1860 is worth a thousand of this. If he wins by his answer now he can never be President."

It is not likely that Lincoln thought at this time that he might be the standard bearer of his Party for that great office. He saw clearly, however, that it would be a national catastrophe if a man who had openly declared that he cared not whether slavery were "voted down or up" should become the head of a Union; and he was willing to sacrifice his greatest ambition to prevent such a result.

He must have realized too, as no one else did, that his arguments during the debates and his clear exposition of the situation which confronted the people of the country, had given him distinction beyond the boundaries of his state and that he would have an audience in other states; that the bold challenge he had made would result in his being called to support it generally before the people during the coming Presidential canvass.

The time had come when he was able, as he had been willing long before in that slave mart in New Orleans, to "hit that thing, and hit it hard." Knowing this, he had appeared this time, to challenge Douglas and through him to challenge all the forces of evil, South or North, that should put material success above the rights of man. He asked nothing of the Nation but what he was willing himself to lead in doing.

The result of the canvass of 1858 had called for material sacrifices as disastrous to his finances as they had been to his political career. The loss of over six months from his business, and the expenses of the canvass, had made a severe drain on his personal income. In this day of million-dollar political backing for those who put on the armor and lead to battle, it is strange to read Lincoln's letter of that time to Norman B. Judd, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, when the books were being balanced.

"I have been on expenses so long, without earning anything," he writes, "that I am absolutely without money now even for household expenses. Still, if you can put in \$250, for me towards discharging the debt of the Committee, I will allow it when you and I settle the private matter between us. This, with what I have already paid, with an outstanding note of mine, will exceed my subscription of \$500. This, too, is exclusive of my ordinary expenses during the campaign,

all of which, being added to my loss of time and business, bears pretty heavily upon one no better off than I am. But as I had the post of honor, it is not for me to be over-nice."

At the time this letter was written, says Herndon, Lincoln's property consisted of the house and lot on which he lived, a few law books and some household furniture. He owned a small tract of land in Iowa which yielded him nothing, and his annual law practice did not exceed three thousand dollars, yet the Party Committee in Chicago were dunning the late standard bearer, who besides the chagrin of his defeat, his own expenses, and the sacrifices of his time, was asked to aid in meeting the general expense of the campaign."

But however fortune frowned, the Lincoln spirit was not daunted. His thirst for knowledge prompted him during the political lull to write a lecture on Inventions, which he delivered in several places. Preparations for this lecture sent him to the library, and his habit of nosing among books supplanted his search for ideas among the groups at the corner grocery and upon the court house steps. The Socratic method was exchanged for that of Bacon. Whether consciously or not, he was preparing himself for supreme leadership.

The long delayed blow had been struck and there were signs that its echoes were still sounding in the farthest corners. Invitations to take part in the political canvass during the Fall of 1859 came from a half dozen states where elections were to be held. Douglas, fresh from the Senate, had gone to Ohio. In response to the demands of Party friends, Lincoln followed. He delivered telling and impressive speeches at Cincinnati and Columbus, following the Senator at both places. His speeches were published and distributed as campaign documents. In December he visited Kansas, speaking



at Atchison, Troy, Leavenworth, and other towns near the border. His reputation grew. The principles upon which he had founded his arguments against Douglas formed the basis of growing proclamation.

Having swung so far to the forefront in the intense struggle, he began to be talked of in connection with the Republican nomination for the Presidency. To be classed with Seward, Chase and other celebrities of the day, must have stimulated the energies of a man far less ambitious for distinction than Abraham Lincoln. Yet he was not done measuring his own genius for the task which he saw clearly would be laid upon the shoulders of him who should be elevated to that office.

To one man who proposed his name, he said, "I beg that you will not give it further mention. Seriously, I do not think I am fit for the Presidency."

But the people of Illinois had already decided to propose him for the high office, whether he was willing or not.

In October, 1859, he had received from New York City an invitation to deliver a lecture and he had accepted, notifying the committee that his speech would deal entirely with political questions. He fixed a day in February as the most convenient time.

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*Chapter XIV*

**AT COOPER INSTITUTE**

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**M**R. LINCOLN'S preparation for his appearance in New York was diligent and exhaustive. His immediate efforts covered the records of the facts of the Framers of the Constitution upon every occasion when the subject of slavery was up. But the preparation did not commence there. It had comprised the best thoughts and aspirations of his whole existence. He had arrived at positive conviction on those principles which he enunciated with such clarity and force in the Cooper Institute. This may be seen from previous utterances. Speaking at Leavenworth in the fall of the preceding year he addressed the Democrats as follows:

“But you Democrats are for the Union; and you greatly fear the success of the Republicans would destroy the Union. Why? Do the Republicans declare against the Union? Nothing like it. Your own statement of it is that if the Black Republicans elect a President you ‘won’t stand it.’ You will break up the Union. That will be your act, not ours. To justify it you must show that our policy gives you just cause for such desperate action. Can you do that? When you attempt it, you will find that our policy is exactly the policy of the man who made the Union—nothing more, nothing less. Do you really think you are justified to break up the

Government rather than have it administered as it was by Washington? If you do, you are very unreasonable, and more reasonable men cannot and will not submit to you. While you elect Presidents, we submit, neither breaking nor attempting to break up the Union. If we shall constitutionally elect a President, it will be our duty to see that you also submit. Old John Brown has been executed for treason against a State. We cannot object, even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed and treason. It could avail him nothing that he might think himself right. So, if we constitutionally elect a President, and, thereafter, you undertake to destroy the Union, it will be our duty to deal with you as Old John Brown has been dealt with. We shall try to do our duty. We hope and believe that in no section will a majority so act as to render such extreme measures necessary."

How far-seeing Lincoln was, is shown here with flawless logic. His sympathies must have been with the impulse of John Brown, but his veneration of the Constitution compelled him to condemn his act. Had he done otherwise, he would have had no firm footing for his later decision in judging the acts of the slave states when they performed a likewise violent act against the Constitution.

In a speech made at Columbus, Ohio, in answer to Douglas, he addressed himself directly to Kentuckians. After showing them that Douglas was as sincerely and quite as wisely for them as they were for themselves, he told them that they must take Douglas for their Presidential candidate under any circumstances or be defeated, and that it was possible, if they did take him, that they might be beaten. He told them what the opposition proposed to do with them in case it should succeed in the approaching Presidential contest.

Through it all runs that broad magnanimity which then as at all future stages of the great conflict, marked him as a man with love for men, on whatever side of a controversy they might have cast their lots. Addressing himself directly to the Kentuckians, he said:

"I will tell you, so far as I am authorized to speak for the opposition, what we mean to do with you. We mean to treat you, as near as we possibly can, as Washington, Jefferson, and Madison treated you. We mean to leave you alone, and in no way to interfere with your institution; to abide by all and every compromise of the Constitution, and, in a word, coming back to the original proposition, to treat you, so far as degenerated men (if we have degenerated) may, according to the examples of those noble fathers, Washington, Jefferson and Madison. We mean to remember that you are as good as we; that there is no difference between us, other than the difference of circumstances. We mean to recognize and bear in mind always that you have as good hearts in your bosoms as other people, or as we claim to have, and treat you accordingly. We mean to marry your girls when we have a chance—the white ones, I mean—and I have the honor to inform you that I once did have a chance that way.

"I have told you what we mean to do. I want to know now, when that thing takes place, what you mean to do. I often hear it intimated that you mean to divide the Union whenever a Republican or anything like it is selected President of the United States."

(A Voice): "That is so!"

"'That is so,' one of them says; I wonder if he is a Kentuckian?"

(A Voice): "He is a Douglas man."

"Well, then, I want to know what you are going to do



with your half of it. Are you going to split the Ohio down through, and push your half off a piece? Or are you going to keep right alongside of us outrageous fellows? Or are you going to build a wall some way between your country and ours, by which that movable property of yours can't come over here any more, to the danger of your losing it? Do you think you can better yourselves on that subject, by leaving us here under no obligation whatever to return those specimens of your movable property that come hither? You have divided the Union because we would not do right with you, as you think, upon that subject; when we cease to be under obligations to do anything for you, how much better off do you think you will be? Will you make war upon us and kill us all? Why, gentlemen, I think you are as gallant and as brave men as live; that you fight as bravely in a good cause, man for man, as any other people living; that you have shown yourselves capable of this on various occasions; but man for man you are not better than we are, and there are not so many of you as there are of us. You will never make much of a hand at whipping us. If we were fewer in numbers than you I think you could whip us; if we were equal it would likely be a drawn battle; but being inferior in numbers, you will make nothing by attempting to master us."

Lincoln never would absolve the men of the South from their blood brotherhood with him and those he represented. He would not concede that they were personal enemies. Their claims that human slavery was right, he did deny, but even then, he was willing to accede to them all that the Constitution gave them and trust to time to bring about the final extinction of bondage confined, as it was confined by the Constitution, to the original slave States. He loved men while hating the evil that blinded their eyes to truth and

justice. This was his most God-like attribute and no man ever walked the earth who had it in superior degree, if there ever was one who equalled it.

He found his text for his Cooper Institute Speech in an utterance of Senator Douglas the night previous in Columbus. Douglas had said that "Our Fathers when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question (the question of slavery) just as well, and even better, than we do now." That statement of Douglas' gave Lincoln an opening which he was not slow to grasp and which, when he had exhausted its possibilities before the foremost thinkers and writers of New York City a few months later, left the brilliant aspirant for the Presidency not a leg to stand on.

As Lincoln sometimes said in his circuit court practice, when he was thoroughly aroused by the tactics of an opposing council, "I am going to skin him," so he proceeded in the present instance. No labor was too severe, and no matter bearing upon the point of what "our fathers" did plan and do upon that momentous question, was too much for him to undertake, nor did he rest until he had every fact bearing upon the question at his finger ends. When he finally took the train for New York, he bore with him a document which was to establish him as the foremost logician of his age, and which was to be a clear deed to the Presidential Chair.

Lincoln left Springfield on this momentous journey unaccompanied by a single friend. So little weight locally attached to his adventure that even the papers did not notice his departure. We have no record of his journey. Lonely, unknown to his traveling companions, he made his solitary way. Lonely and unknown he arrived in the great metropolis. No committee waited at the station to do him honor. He registered at the Astor House, a stranger, without one friend to clasp

his hand or smile encouragement to his great undertaking. How he occupied himself before his appearance among the sophisticated and critical, who shall say? What were his musings, his apprehensions, his despairs during those hours of tedious waiting? Only those who have acquainted themselves with the deep melancholy of his nature can in any way approach. And when he finally stood before the audience, not a single soul of all assembled there was known to him. The trees to whom he spoke in those days of youthful trial of oratory were more intimate and companionable.

For a report of this meeting and the consideration these new and more critical friends had of him and his speech before and after its delivery, we are indebted to the account written by Charles C. Nott, which was published in 1909 in George Haven Putnam's "Abraham Lincoln: The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence." It is a plain unvarnished tale and in the light of later events a deeply pathetic one. Mr. Nott's picture of Lincoln, going from that company of the foremost thinkers of the Nation's metropolis where he had astonished, enthralled and enlightened them, limping along the street with the pain of a new pair of boots, being guided by his one lone companion to a street car and directed where to leave it in order to reach his hotel,—certainly there is no page of fiction offers a stranger or more deeply moving scene. How the descendants of any one of those present would glory today in a statement that one of their ancestors drove Lincoln from Cooper Institute to his hotel. None such appeared. He was the last lone passenger in the street car, grinding over the streets of a city as bare of companions or sympathetic friends to him as the car itself. Mr. Nott himself, does not hesitate to declare his own part in this strange scene of which he writes:

"The Cooper Institute address is one of the most important addresses ever delivered in the life of this nation, for at an eventful time it changed the course of history. When Mr. Lincoln rose to speak on the evening of February 27, 1860, he had held no administrative office; he had endeavored to be appointed Commissioner of Patents, and had failed; he had sought to be elected United States Senator, and had been defeated; he had been a Member of Congress, yet it was not even remembered; he was a lawyer in humble circumstances, persuasive of juries, but had not reached the front rank of the Illinois Bar. The record which Mr. Lincoln himself placed in the Congressional Directory in 1847 might still be taken as the record of his public and official life:

"'Born February 12th, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. Education defective. Profession a lawyer. Have been a Captain of Volunteers in the Black Hawk War. Postmaster in a very small office. Four times a member of the Illinois Legislature and a Member of the Lower House of Congress.' Was this the record of a man who should be made the head of a nation in troubled times? In the estimation of thoughtful Americans east of the Alleghanies all that they knew of Mr. Lincoln justified them in regarding him as only 'a Western stump orator'—successful, distinguished, but nothing higher than that—a Western stump orator, who had dared to brave one of the strongest men in the Western States, and who had done so with wonderful ability and moral success. When Mr. Lincoln closed his address he had risen to the rank of statesman, and had stamped himself a statesman peculiarly fitted for the exigency of the hour.

"Mr. William Cullen Bryant presided at the meeting; and a number of the first and ablest citizens of New York were present, among them Horace Greeley. Mr. Greeley was pro-



nounced in his appreciation of the address; it was the ablest, the greatest, the wisest speech that had yet been made; it would reassure the conservative Northerner; it was just what was wanted to conciliate the excited Southerner; it was conclusive in its argument, and would assure the overthrow of Douglas. Mr. Horace White has recently written: 'I chanced to open the other day his Cooper Institute speech. This is one of the few printed speeches that I did not hear him deliver in person. As I read the concluding pages of that speech, the conflict of opinion that preceded the conflict of arms then sweeping upon the country like an approaching solar eclipse seemed pre-figured like a chapter of the Book of Fate. Here again he was the Old Testament prophet, before whom Horace Greeley bowed his head, saying that he had never listened to a greater speech, although he had heard several of Webster's best.' Later, Mr. Greeley became the Leader of the Republican forces opposed to the nomination of Mr. Seward and was instrumental in concentrating those forces upon Mr. Lincoln. Furthermore the great New York press on the following morning carried the address to the country, and before Mr. Lincoln left New York he was telegraphed from Connecticut to come and aid in the campaign of the approaching spring election. He went, and when the fateful moment came in the Convention, Connecticut was one of the Eastern States which first broke away from the Seward column and went over to Mr. Lincoln. When Connecticut did this, the die was cast."

It is difficult for younger generations of Americans to believe that three months before Mr. Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency he was neither appreciated nor known in New York. The fact can be better established by a single incident than by the opinions and assurances of a dozen men.

"After the address had been delivered, Mr. Lincoln was taken by two members of the Young Men's Central Republican Union—Mr. Hiram Barney, afterward Collector of the Port of New York, and Mr. Nott, one of the subsequent editors of the address—to their club, The Athenaeum, where a very simple supper was ordered, and five or six Republican members of the club who chanced to be in the building were invited in. The supper was informal—as informal as anything could be; the conversation was easy and familiar; the prospects of the Republican Party in the coming struggle were talked over, and so little was it supposed by the gentlemen who had not heard the address that Mr. Lincoln could possibly be a candidate that one of them, Mr. Charles W. Elliott, asked, artlessly: 'Mr. Lincoln, what candidate do you really think would be most likely to carry Illinois?' Mr. Lincoln answered by illustration: 'Illinois is a peculiar State, in three parts. In northern Illinois, Mr. Seward would have a larger majority than I could get. In middle Illinois, I think I could call out a larger vote than Mr. Seward. In southern Illinois, it would make no difference who was the candidate.' This answer was taken to be merely illustrative by everybody except, perhaps, Mr. Barney and Mr. Nott, each of whom, it subsequently appeared, had particularly noted Mr. Lincoln's reply.

"The little party broke up. Mr. Lincoln had been cordially received, but certainly had not been flattered. The others shook him by the hand and, as they put on their overcoats, said: "Mr. Nott is going down town and he will show you the way to the Astor House." Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Nott started on foot, but the latter observing that Mr. Lincoln was apparently walking with some difficulty, said, "Are you lame, Mr. Lincoln?" He replied that he had on new boots and they

hurt him. The two gentlemen then boarded a street car. When they reached the place where Mr. Nott would leave the car to go to his home, he shook Mr. Lincoln's hand, and bidding him goodby, told him that this car would carry him to the side door of the Astor House. Mr. Lincoln went on alone, the only occupant of the car.

"I have often wondered what Mr. Lincoln thought during the remainder of his ride that night to the Astor House," says Mr. Nott. "The Cooper Institute had, owing to a snow-storm, not been full, and its intelligent, respectable, non-partisan audience had not rung out enthusiastic applause like a concourse of Western auditors magnetized by their own enthusiasm. Had the address—the most carefully prepared, the most elaborately investigated and demonstrated and verified of all the work of his life—been a failure? But in the matter of quality and ability, if not in quantity and enthusiasm, he had never addressed such an audience; and some of the ablest men in the Northern States had expressed their opinion of the address in terms which left no doubt of the highest appreciation. Did Mr. Lincoln regard the address which he had just delivered to a small and critical audience as a success? Did he have the faintest glimmer of the brilliant effect which was to follow? Did he feel the loneliness of the situation—the want of his loyal Illinois adherents? Did his sinking heart infer that he was but a speck of humanity to which the great city would never again give a thought? He was a plain man, an ungainly man; unadorned, apparently uncultivated, showing the awkwardness of self-conscious rusticity. His dress that night before a New York audience was the most unbecoming that a fiend's ingenuity could have devised for a tall, gaunt man—a black frock coat, ill-setting and too short for him in the body, skirt, and arms—a rolling collar,

low-down, disclosing his long, thin, shrivelled throat uncovered and exposed. No man in all New York appeared that night more simple, more unassuming, more modest, more unpretentious, more conscious of his own defects than Abraham Lincoln; and yet we now know that within his soul there burned the fires of an unbounded ambition, sustained by a self-reliance and self-esteem, that bade him fix his gaze upon the very pinnacle of American fame, and aspire to it in a time so troubled that its dangers appalled the soul of every American. What were this man's thoughts when he was left alone? Did a faint shadow of the future rest upon his soul? Did he feel in some mysterious way that on that night he had crossed the Rubicon of his life-march—that care and trouble and political discord, and slander and misrepresentation and ridicule and public responsibilities, such as hardly ever before burdened a conscientious soul, coupled with war and defeat and disaster, were to be thenceforth his portion nearly to his life's end; and that his end was to be a bloody act which would appall the world and send a thrill of horror through the hearts of friends and enemies alike, so that when the woeful tidings came, the bravest of the Southern brave should burst into tears and cry aloud, 'Oh! the unhappy South, the unhappy South.'"

The impression left on his companion's mind, as he gave a last glance at him in the street car, was that he seemed sad and lonely; and when it was too late, when the car was beyond call, he blamed himself for not accompanying Mr. Lincoln to the Astor House—not because he was a distinguished stranger, but because he seemed a sad and lonely man.

That Lincoln felt himself able to grasp and present with force and understanding the questions then agitating the Nation, has a happy proof in his letter to Mr. Nott, written



in May, 1860. The Young Men's Republican Union of New York City were desirous of getting out a fine edition of the Cooper Institute speech, and Mr. Nott was commissioned to write Mr. Lincoln concerning his wishes in the matter. One wonders at the temerity of the young reviewer in suggesting to Abraham Lincoln corrections and emendations in a speech over which he had worked for months, and the material for which, under the vital heat of controversy, he had been a life time in absorbing. Nowhere is Lincoln's magnanimity, coupled with his adamant firmness, more clearly displayed than in this correspondence.

69 Wall St., New York,  
May 23, 1860.

Dear Sir:

I enclose copy of your address in New York.

We (the Young Men's Rep. Union) design to publish a new edition in larger type and better form, with such notes and references as will best attract readers seeking information. Have you any memoranda of your investigations which you would approve of inserting?

You and your Western friends, I think, under-rate this speech. It has produced a greater effect here than any other single speech. It is the real platform in the Eastern States, and must carry the conservative element in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Therefore, I desire that it should be as nearly perfect as may be. Most of the emendations are trivial and do not affect the substance—all are merely suggested for your judgment.

I cannot help adding that this speech is an extraordinary example of condensed English. After some experience in criticising for Reviews, I find hardly anything to touch and

nothing to omit. It is the only one I know of which I cannot *shorten*, and—like a good arch—moving one word tumbles a whole sentence down.

Respectfully,

CHARLES C. NOTT.

To Hon. Abraham Lincoln.

Springfield, Ill., May 31, 1860.

Charles C. Nott, Esq.

My dear Sir:

Yours of the 23rd, accompanied by a copy of the speech delivered by me at the Cooper Institute, and upon which you have made some notes for emendations, was received some days ago—Of course I would not object to, but would be pleased rather, with a more perfect edition of that speech.

I did not preserve memoranda of my investigations; and I could not now re-examine, and make notes, without an expenditure of time which I cannot bestow upon it—Some of your notes I do not understand.

So far as it is intended merely to improve in grammar, and elegance of composition, I am quite agreed; but I do not wish the sense changed, or modified, to a hair's breadth—and you, not having studied the particular points so closely as I have, can not be quite sure that you do not change the sense when you do not intend it—For instance, in a note at bottom of first page, you propose to substitute "Democrats" for "Douglas"—but what I am saying there is *true* of Douglas, and is not true of "Democrats" generally; so that the proposed substitution would be a very considerable blunder—you propose insertion of "residences" though it would do little or no harm, is not at all necessary to the sense I was trying to convey—On page 5 your proposed grammatical change would certainly do no harm—The "impudently

absurd" I stick to—The striking out "he" and inserting "we" turns the sense exactly wrong—The sense is "act as they acted *upon that question*"—not as they acted generally.

After considering your proposed changes on page 7, I do not think them material, but I am willing to defer to you in relation to them.

On page 9, striking out "to us" is probably right—The word "lawyer's" I wish retained. The word "Courts" struck out twice. I wish reduced to "Court" and retained—"Court" as a collection more properly governs the plural "have" as I understand—"the" preceding "Court" in the latter case, must also be retained—The words "quite," "as," and "or" on the same page I wish retained. The italicising, the quotation marking, I have no objection to.

As to the note at bottom, I do not think any too much is admitted—What you propose on page 11 is right—I return your copy of the speech, together with one printed here, under my own hasty supervising. That at New York was printed without any supervision by me—If you conclude to publish a new edition, allow me to see the proof-sheets.

And now thanking you for your very complimentary letter, and your interest for me generally, I subscribe myself

Your friend and servant,

A. LINCOLN.

It must have given Lincoln a good hearty laugh to be informed in the footnotes to the speech, when it was finally printed as he had directed, that "No one who has not actually attempted to verify its details can understand the patient research and historical labor which it embodies . . . Neither can anyone who has not travelled over this precise ground appreciate the accuracy of every trivial detail, or the self-denying impartiality with which Mr. Lincoln has turned

from the testimony of "the Fathers" on the general question of slavery, to present the single question he discusses. From the first line to the last—from his premise to his conclusion, he travels with swift, unerring directness which no logician ever excelled—an argument complete and full, without the affectation of learning, and without the stiffness which usually accompanies dates and details. A single, easy, simple sentence of plain Anglo-Saxon words contains a chapter of history that, in some instances, has taken days of labor to verify and which must have cost the author months of investigation to acquire."

Lincoln, reading these lines, and remembering how not months but a lifetime of investigation and demonstration had furnished him with those facts,—can one not see the merry twinkle in his eye?

Following the Cooper Institute speech Lincoln made several speeches in the East, the report of it having caused telegraph demands without number. He visited his son Robert at Exeter, New Hampshire, where he was a student at Phillips Academy. He spoke at Providence, Concord, Hartford, Meriden, Connecticut, and Bridgeport, Connecticut. He wrote from Exeter, March 4th, 1860, to his wife:

"I have been unable to escape this toil. If I had foreseen it, I think I would not have come East at all. The speech at New York, being within my calculation before I started, went off passably well and gave me no trouble whatever. The difficulty was to make nine others before reading audiences who have already seen all my ideas in print."

This extract, reveals the melancholy side of Lincoln's nature. He could not see, or was not convinced, that his speeches were going to play an important part in making him President. But so it was, as the action of the delegates proved.



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It was the Cooper Institute oration, the last composed political speech Lincoln ever made, that won the East to his support, and gave him the final ascendancy over Mr. Seward, his formidable rival in the convention. The man whom New York had allowed to go a lonely way to his lonely room after his speech, when next he stood in that city one year later, rode in a carriage drawn by four white horses and bowed to the shouting thousands lining the streets. He was the newly elected President of the United States.

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*Chapter XV*

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC**

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**T**HE REPUBLICAN National Convention, which met in Chicago in May 1860, nominated Abraham Lincoln for President of the United States. His principal opponents for the high office were Seward of New York, and Chase of Ohio. Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot. When the vote was announced the great Wigwam, which had been built to house the convention, became a whirlpool of political emotion, the outer edges of which spread to every loyal state in the Union. The humble rail splitter of Illinois had defeated the famous statesman of New York and the cultured Senator of Ohio, both of whom, as Lincoln himself said, had borne the labor and abuse of initial leadership in the new Party and were entitled to the honor more than he.

But the delegates who made up that great Convention of protest against oligarchy, had something else in their minds than honors earned and culture acquired. They came up from the country to Chicago, a vigorous, virile citizenry, men of the shop and the farm, the counter, the school and from the bloody plains of Kansas. To them the Wigwam became a holy shrine upon whose altar they were gathered to offer sacrifice to the Goddess of Liberty and Freedom. Seward's "Irrepressible Conflict," and his "Law higher than the Con-

stitution," shone pale and dim beside Lincoln's flaming "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The declaration of Chase that, Constitution or no Constitution, the slaves should be set free, bold and chivalric as it was, lacked the conviction of Lincoln's sane worship of the Constitution and his declaration that that document formed the only wall against which the Nation could put its back in the coming struggle for existence. Not since the meeting of the Fathers in Independence Hall had men come together with an eye single to the one idea—the sacredness of God's creation in the individual man.

In Lincoln they recognized a man like themselves, a child of toil, who saw in the bread got by the sweat of the brow the symbol of all dignity to which man might attain, and in the degradation of toil, the serpent that was to strangle all the simplicity and dignity of life. Already they had given him the title of "Honest Abe Lincoln" and it was honesty and not brilliance or culture or senatorial robes to which they turned in that momentous hour. They chose their captain, and in that choice gave added proof that the dictum, "The voice of the people is the voice of God," may be rightly applied to that part of the people who are touched by the spirit of a sublime idea.

Many careful students of the time have sought to locate the cause of Seward's defeat by Lincoln in that Convention, but they cannot agree among themselves about it. Is it not because they concentrate their gaze upon Seward and Lincoln instead of upon the people? The sophisticated of our day can no more understand why the "great plain people" chose their great plain leader in the hour of their country's crisis, than could the sophisticated of 1860. Seward was everything the sophisticated mind could ask for—a truly great man bound

heart and soul to the cause of the Union. Chase was no less so. Both had long been in the forefront of the battle out of which had sprung the Republican Party. But sophistication is a flimsy, if elegant, covering for truth, and is licked up with a single flame of genuine passion. Lincoln was the rugged granite which only returned an added glow to the heat of the hour, with its character undisturbed.

The news was flashed to Springfield that Lincoln had been nominated, and the man most concerned took the dispatch with a steady hand but with a deeper glow in those fathomless eyes, to "the little woman down the street who would like to hear the news."

His letter of acceptance is in strong contrast to most of such utterances of record. "Sir," he wrote, addressing the Honorable George Ashum, Chairman of the Convention, "I accept the nomination tendered me by the Convention over which you presided, I am formally apprised in a letter of yourself and others, acting as a Committee of the Convention for that purpose. The declaration of principles which accompanies your letter meets my approval, and it shall be my care not to violate it or disregard it in any part. Imploring the assistance of Divine Providence, and with due regard to the views and feelings of all who were represented in the Convention, to the rights of all the States and Territories and the people of the Nation, to the inviolability of the Constitution and the perpetual Union, prosperity, and harmony of all, I am most happy to coöperate for the practical success of the principles declared by the Convention."

Lincoln took no counsel for this utterance. None was needed. The platform adopted by the Convention was not written to conceal thought but to make its purpose clear. The Republican Party was born full-souled and free. It



sought not clouds but sunshine. The platform, and Lincoln's acceptance of it, are in strong contrast to most of the platforms and acceptances of our own time when the wisest is puzzled to find in the mass of big sounding words and involved sentences any exact meaning, or any well-defined principles. It will be a happy day for the people when their self-constituted leaders return to the simplicity and directness of Lincoln's nomination.

The canvass that followed was the personification of intensity. Men shouted a great deal but thought a great deal more. The result was a Republican victory. Lincoln was elected President of the United States and the country paused for a brief moment to breathe and take account of its direction. The election returns gave a popular vote to Lincoln of 1,857,610: Douglas, 1,291,574: Breckenridge, 850,911: Bell, 646,124; in the Electoral College Lincoln received 180 votes, Breckenridge 72, Bell 39, and Douglas 12, the lone State of Missouri.

Having been officially notified of his election, Mr. Lincoln, as Herndon relates, moved his headquarters from the law office of Lincoln and Herndon to a room in the State House Building, and there with his Secretary, John G. Nicolay, he spent the busy days of his campaign. "But he still loved," says his partner, "to come to our office of evenings, and spend an hour with a few choice friends in friendly privacy which was denied him at his public headquarters. These were among the last meetings we had with Lincoln as our friend and fellow at the Bar; and they are also the most delightful recollections any of us have retained of him."

Then came the day of Lincoln's departure for Washington. Henry B. Rankin who was present, has described the time passed between Lincoln's election and his departure from

Springfield with rare sympathy and feeling. He tells us how from his election, November 6, 1860, to February 11, 1861, Lincoln awaited the ceremony of inauguration. Springfield had become the mecca of admirers, as well as of a horde of office seekers, who thronged around him. Thus before he had assumed the office of state, he felt the burden of a pressure for official recognition, which continued to oppress and distract him to the day of his death. "He passed those trying first months after his election," says the chronicle, "with rare wisdom, patience and tact. Where he could not agree, or wished to parry questions, which no foresight could then safely solve, he became the questioner himself, or sent his caller away with an apt story. No ill-considered promise, no committal on policies to guide his administration, escaped his lips to compromise or tie up his future usefulness. There were no such indiscretions, through inexperience, during these first months when he appeared in national view as the President elect.

"On the evening of February 10, 1861, he spent his last hours with his partner in the old office of Lincoln and Hurd. They conferred for the last time on a few unfinished legal affairs, and arranged minor business matters. They remained alone until late, passed down the stairway together and along the streets, until near Lincoln's home, where they parted for the last time in Springfield.

"The next morning, under a leaden sky, the people assembled to bid him farewell at the station, saw Lincoln appear for a brief moment at the rear door of the car. He paused, as if surprised at the sudden burst of applause occasioned by his appearance, and removing his hat stepped out on the platform, bowing right and left and remaining silent until the salute ceased. His short address was a great surprise

to reporters and politicians. In it there was nothing that satisfied their excited expectations. In its delivery there were no gestures. His manner was calm and self-contained, yet his voice was tremulous with suppressed emotions, while strong emphasis marked many words and sentences. The last sentence was spoken in lower tones, with a yearning tenderness in his voice, most unusual to him; and, with its closing words, he bowed low, and with firmly compressed lips whose silence meant so much to those who knew him best, turned from his position on the platform and stood at the open door, while the train, just starting, moved slowly bearing him away from us through the cold grey misty haze of rain. Little then we knew how he would return! Thank God for the shortness of human vision; that he who went, and we who remained, could not then discern the appalling future that so darkly hung above and before us all!

“These were his farewell words:

“MY FRIENDS: No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feelings of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

“The train rolled on, leaving the two or three hundred



people, who had heard this farewell address, disappointed at its simplicity and neither did its publication win for it immediately the recognition which has since been accorded it as among the most sublime of intimate expressions that has fallen from the lips of man."

The journey to Washington was a leisurely one, time having been allotted for the President-elect to appear and speak to the people along the route. At Westfield, Illinois, Lincoln characteristically descended from the train and taking a little girl in his arms, kissed her. The child was Grace Bedell, who previous to the election had received a lithograph of Lincoln and written to him of her admiration, and having her childish heart moved by the rugged pathos of his features, had suggested that if he were to let his whiskers grow his appearance would be improved. "You see," he said, "I have let these whiskers grow for you, Grace," one of the most illuminating incidents of the nature of this most remarkable man.

In Philadelphia, Lincoln assisted at the ceremonies of unfurling a magnificent new flag, and again declared his deep reverence for the Constitution and the men who had given it to the world. "I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself in this place," he said, "where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. You have kindly suggested to me that in my hands is the task of restoring peace to our distracted country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence."



Rumors of a plot to assassinate the incoming President had gained such credence that Lincoln was that night transferred to another train and accompanied by detectives. The train ran directly through Baltimore to Washington where Mr. Lincoln was met at 6:30 A. M. by Lyman B. Trumbull, and taken to the Willard Hotel. Here he revised his Inaugural Address and listened to suggestions from different politicians concerning his proposed Cabinet. On the morning of the 4th of March he rode from his hotel, with Mr. Buchanan, in an open barouche to the Capitol. There upon a square platform that had been built out from the steps of the eastern portico, with benches for distinguished guests on three sides, the customary oath of office was administered by the venerable Chief Justice Taney. Among the guests was his old rival, Senator Douglas. Lincoln, when he stepped forward to deliver his address, was embarrassed at finding no place to dispose of his hat except on the floor. Douglas, appreciating the situation, came to the rescue of his former antagonist and held the hat until its owner needed it again.

The imminence of Civil War had swept aside those superficial things which Douglas had once considered essential, and with clear eyes he saw how "true and righteous altogether" had been the judgments of his great opponent. He listened with close attention to the address, punctuating the passages with appreciative nods, and with as genuine patriotism as that of the man who delivered them. The fiction of his famous compromise was revealed. The Little Giant at that moment had his triumph too. He had conquered himself and willingly he became the humble servitor to a nobler genius.

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## *Chapter XVI*

# IN THE WHITE HOUSE

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LINCOLN'S First Inaugural, notwithstanding the deep current of love for all mankind, whatever their differences, was no more than a feather on the tornado of passion that was sweeping over the country. Neither its frank intimacy nor its lofty idealism found lodgment in the minds of those who were already in arms against the Union. Its sanity awoke no echo in the hearts of the radical wing of the Republican Party, and its declaration expressing determination to maintain inviolate the rights of the states fell short of the desires of even the most conservative of the masses north of Mason and Dixon's Line.

His Cabinet to which he had brought such men as Seward, Chase, Cameron, Blair, Bates and Smith, had in its membership three Republicans and four Democrats. Only by wise and judicious appeal to their predominating virtues had he induced Seward and Chase to become members of one political family. Both had been ambitious for the office he held, and neither could comprehend the state of the public mind which had chosen him to represent it in their stead. He had given the portfolio of State to Seward and he had accepted it. Chase, when tendered the office of the Secretary of the Treasury, felt his pride rise at being tendered a secondary post by his old political rival, and only Lincoln's direct appeal to his

patriotism and sense of duty in a situation that called for the sacrifice of self upon the altar of the Union, had induced him to agree to serve. Even after Lincoln's arrival in Washington and before he had been inaugurated, a situation arose which threatened to break the slate Lincoln had prepared with so much sleepless anxiety. Seward's friends waited on Mr. Lincoln and urged him to withhold the appointment of Chase. This he declined to do. The delegation gloweringly retired. A little later Seward sent a brief and coldly formal note in which he asked "leave to withdraw" the acceptance of his appointment. Such a crisis on the eve of his administration might have caused a stronger man than Lincoln was supposed to be, to change his plans. But the great heart of Lincoln, bound up in his country's honor and his country's peril, counselled him wisely. Pondering over the situation for two days, he handed his answer to his Private Secretary, on the morning of his inauguration, with his homely smile and, "I can't afford to let Seward take the first trick."

The note was brief as that of Seward. Without touching upon the questions at issue, the message expressed a keen desire that Seward should not persist in his purpose. "It is the subject of the most painful solicitude to me," wrote Mr. Lincoln, "and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply enlisted in the same direction. Please consider and answer by nine o'clock A. M. tomorrow."

Unable to withstand such a direct appeal to his higher sense of duty, Seward reconsidered his decision and the next day the cabinet appointments, as originally composed, were submitted to the Senate, "And," flashes Rothschild, "Seward's name, like Abou Ben Adhem's, led all the rest."

It is impossible to conceive at this time with a solidified Union, the disorganized state of the government when Lincoln was suddenly thrust into the heart of things and given the task of bringing order out of chaos. Sumter was besieged. For months the sympathizers with the resolve of the South to secede had been stripping the government arsenals of arms and munitions. Soldiers trained at Annapolis and West Point had retired and cast their lots with the new Confederacy. The treasury was bankrupt. Many of the Senators and Members of the House were disloyal. There was practically no standing army. Officers of the Army and Navy, resigning from the service in large numbers, turned their swords against the Government; treason paralyzed every department at Washington; civil government buildings, forts, arsenals, lighthouses, ships, marine hospitals, and navy yards had been seized by the rapidly organized Confederacy. Demoralization North, and impudent assumption of authority South, offered hardly a point of vantage for the new administration to lay hold upon. Proclaimed enemies to the Union gave to the President less anxious hours than the fearful and distracting elements in his own party. Even the Members of his Cabinet looked askance at the tall ungainly stranger from the Illinois prairies, as yet untried in the complicated duties of administration. Seward patronized him from the first. He considered himself far more capable of conducting the affairs of the Government than his Chief. He could not believe that one with the limited experience in public affairs, such as he knew Lincoln to have had could manage so tremendous a machine, already racked almost to demolition. Before a month went by, Seward had determined to win the consent of Lincoln to surrender his authority, and to permit him to pilot the Ship of State. He wrote to his wife,



"I have assumed a sort of dictatorship for defense; I am laboring night and day, with cities and with states. My hope, rather my confidence, is unabated."

Seward's activities were such that the opinion gained ground everywhere that Seward, not Lincoln, was the real President. Mrs. Lincoln, ever vigilant for her husband's honor, repeated to him the boast of the Secretary's friends that Seward was the power behind the throne and could rule the President as he willed. Lincoln answered her, "I may not rule myself, but certainly Seward shall not. The only ruler I have is my conscience—following God in it—and these men will have to learn that yet."

Meanwhile the Confederacy gained headway. Evacuation of Fort Sumter seemed inevitable. Major Anderson reported that his provisions were almost exhausted, that the batteries about the fort had grown so formidable and the post was, in many essentials, so weak, that it became daily less tenable. In a few weeks the garrison would be reduced to starvation. Not less than twenty thousand well diciplined men would be required to succor his decimated command. No such force appearing, Lieutenant General Scott, the Commander-in-Chief, advised the President to order evacuation. Lincoln stood firm. In his Inaugural Address he had declared that "The power confided in me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government." Should he be foresworn at the first threat of danger? He ordered General Scott to hold on. This brought protests from all the Members of his Cabinet except one, Postmaster General Blair, a Democrat of the Jacksonian school. Seward and Chase were both emphatic in their stand to give up the Fort. Still Lincoln refused to order a retreat.

Lincoln kept his own council, studied the maps, was inde-

fatigable in his interviews with army men, listened to the advice of his Cabinet, gave every suggestion serious consideration, once in a while relieved the intensity of his feelings by a pat story, but surrendered no jot or tittle of his authority. Yet, because he did give courteous attention to their suggestions, because he did not openly proclaim his own slowly forming opinions, because he was a big man, big enough to bear his burdens in silence and deal kindly and generously with those who took little care to hide their feelings of superiority, because he did not attempt what he could not perform, but held judgment in abeyance until the hour should be ripe for action, they made false measures of his stature, discounted his powers, doubted his firmness and thought themselves the heroes of the hour.

Then pondering long on his superiority to the President and impatient with the times,—no doubt urged by his followers, Seward at last determined to declare openly to the President his entire disapproval of the President's conduct of affairs. In "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration," dated April 1, 1861, he declared:

"First. We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy, either domestic or foreign.

"Second. This, however, is not culpable, and we must CHANGE THE QUESTION BEFORE THE PUBLIC FROM ONE UPON SLAVERY OR ABOUT SLAVERY, for a question upon UNION or DISUNION.

"In other words, from what would be regarded as a Party question, to one of *Patriotism or Union*.

"The occupation or evacuation of Fort Sumter, although not in fact a slavery or a Party question is so *regarded*. Witness the temper manifested by the Republicans in the free states, and even by the Union men in the South.

“FOR FOREIGN NATIONS”

“I would demand explanation from Spain and France, categorically, at once.

“I would seek explanations from Great Britain and Russia, and send agents into Canada, Mexico, and Central America, to rouse a continental spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention.

“And, if satisfactory explanations are not received from Spain and France,

“Would convene Congress and declare war against them.

“But whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

“For this purpose it must be somebody’s business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

“Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it or

“Devolve it on some Member of his Cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide.

“It is not my especial province.

“But I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility.”

Only a soul imbued with God-like patience could have temperately considered the matter. Lincoln had such a patient soul. He did not accept the summons; neither did he reply in kind. He answered highly, serenely, soberly, generously, but with a firmness, the sublimity of which should have given his Secretary of State a much juster estimate of his Chief. The criticisms of his policies he destroyed by a recital of his deeds. The summons to confer upon Seward absolute authority he answered in these words:

Executive Mansion, April 1, 1861.

Hon. W. H. Seward.

My Dear Sir: Since parting with you I have been considering

your paper dated this day, and entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration." The first proposition in it is, "*First*, We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy, either domestic or foreign."

At the beginning of that month, in the Inaugural, I said, "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts." This had your distinct approval at the time; and, taken in connection with the order I immediately gave General Scott, directing him to employ every means in his power to strengthen and hold the forts, comprises the exact domestic policy you now urge, with the single exception that it does not propose to abandon Fort Sumter.

Again, I do not perceive how the reinforcement of Fort Sumter would be done on a slavery or Party issue, while that of Fort Pickens would be on a more national and patriotic one.

Upon your closing propositions, that "whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it,

"For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly,

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

"Devolve it on some Member of his Cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide." I remark that if this must be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the Cabinet.

Your ob't serv't, A. LINCOLN.



No one familiar with Mr. Lincoln's character can doubt how he suffered from this expressed belief in his weakness by one of his closest and most respected advisers. No one can doubt his desire to take advantage of the ammunition his indiscreet Secretary had placed in his hands; but neither can one doubt his greater desire for every assistance he could have from a man of Seward's genius in the hour of the Nation's peril. That his magnanimous treatment, while retaining his position with flawless honor, was effective, as he must have reasoned it would be, has proof enough in the long and faithful service rendered to Lincoln and the country by Seward and the high place Lincoln grew to have in his affections and esteem. It was not so long after this episode before we find Seward writing to his wife, "Executive skill and vigor are rare qualities. The President is the best of us."

The President's Cabinet was made up of the strongest men he could name of undoubted loyalty. The fact that he wished to surround himself with superior minds, one would think, should have added to the conviction that he did not fear comparison with the best equipped mentality of his time. Furthermore, he required of each Member of the Cabinet proof of his ability to conduct the affairs of that department in the best possible way, by giving him the utmost liberty compatible with the dignity of his own supreme authority. Instead of inspiring them with confidence in his astuteness, this action fed their vanity while at the same time it contributed to their belief that he felt himself unable to lay hold of and handle the complicated affairs of administration. It took many a quiet correction, many humorous fables and not a few abrupt and uncompromising orders from the President, laboring under his Atlas load with the world gone wrong, to convince them of his true wisdom and greatness.

Some of these, Chase most of all, never did appreciate to its full power the master intellect of the new man in the Nation. Having supervision of but one branch of the Government, they could not see it as a whole. Measuring the demands of the hour by the demands of their particular department, they wished the entire orchestra to be tuned to their single reed. It is apparent now that Lincoln alone, of all the great men engaged in the gigantic struggle of saving the Nation, rose to a height where he could look down upon that awful tangle of passion and prejudice and behold with God-like compassion its conflicting elements. Never was man given so great a task with so few means for its accomplishment. Confronted by the swift gathering forces of the Confederacy, rebellion already an accomplished fact, one of the National forts besieged and its defenders on the verge of starvation, he had not at his command a force of twenty thousand men, the required estimate to rescue that fort and its beleaguered garrison. Neither troops nor trained men to officer them had he in the field. Neither could he call for volunteers without precipitating civil war. What such a war meant he realized, and he shrank from it with horror. With a heart as tender as that of a mother with her sucking babe at her breast, he recoiled from taking any action that should strew the fertile fields of the Republic with the mangled bodies of her sons. Numberless little men pecked at him for puny offices; political cables stormed the White House with demands for patronage with which to satisfy henchmen; radicals behind him howled for an immediate declaration of freedom for the slaves, while conservatives demanded any kind of compromise rather than an appeal to arms. His Secretary of State was willing to bring on a war with foreign nations in the hope to consolidate the country against a foreign foe. With no

record of public administration to inspire confidence among his colleagues; with no outward show of sophistication, and no inward weakness to counsel abandonment of principle to expediency; without a single confidant to whom he could unburden his overcharged heart; solitary, alone, doubted, traduced, despised, hated, maligned, he stood calm, firm, defiant, as years before in Gentryville he had stood with his back to the wall and with silent lips but flashing eyes had held at bay the milling mob of Clary Grove.

As in that backwoods drama Lincoln, by the clear knowledge of his position in the right, and his unflinching determination to hold his position in the firm faith that the right must finally triumph in any case, had brought those rough contending spirits to subjection and finally to respect and follow him, so by the help of that Divine Providence, to which he had made such reverent appeal on leaving Springfield, he subjected the warring factions behind him and finally the rebellious factions confronting the nation, until they one and all acknowledged him as not only their superior at every point, but their great lover and the best friend they ever should know.

During those first weeks of his administration, Lincoln was as a man standing at the verge of a simoon-tossed desert, with a tremendous reservoir behind him, his hand on the lever which could release it, but when the release of the tiniest rivulet would be followed by a deluge which should drown the world. One call for military help would bring on civil war. Silent and solitary, with the awful tragedy of such a civil conflict before him, the son of the Kentucky carpenter pioneer wrestled in his Gethsemane, the agony of a mortal world surging up in his heart, and the discords of a war-mad nation throbbing in his soul.

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## *Chapter XVII*

# SAVING THE UNION

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**S**UMTER FELL and war came. His appeal to the better nature of his enemies having been unheeded, the President was forced to fight for the Union he had sworn to uphold at all hazards. Congress was not in session and he was compelled to act on his own initiative. He called for volunteers. Everywhere were heard the ominous roll of the drum, the shrill cadence of the fife, and the growing murmur of defiance.

City streets were picturesque with volunteer commands, zouaves, artillery companies, civilian gatherings. Along rural roads in clouds of dust country boys hurried to offer themselves to the recruiting station. This all over the North. In the seceding slave states where preparation had been going forward for months, the nucleus of a large army was already in solid formation under the instructions of trained officers, educated in the military academies of the Nation. The rights of a State as against the rights of a Nation, were proclaimed and the chivalry of the aristocratic South was pitted against the less spectacular but deeply determined commonalty of the North. The land was dotted with white tents. Mothers of all sections gave tearful blessings to their sons while, like those of ancient Sparta, they bade them "come home with their shields or on them."



At the Nation's capitol there was hurrying to and fro in strange disordered tumult. The desertion of southern congressmen had left the Republicans in control of the Government, and when Congress assembled it hurried to make legal the President's acts in calling for volunteers and to declare war upon the insurrection that had spread to all the cotton states and was threatening to have the support of the border states. To save if possible these border states to the Union was Mr. Lincoln's pronounced determination. He had called to his Cabinet men representing all factions of those parties which denied the claim of the States' Rights as opposed to the supreme right of the Union. But no two of these factions agreed as to the best way to preserve the Union. Some were for an immediate proclamation freeing the slaves. Some were for allowing slavery to continue, even with its encroachments upon the Territories. Some were for permitting it to exist in the States where it had already been given recognition by the Constitution.

Among them all, the President was alone in his position to preserve the Union by any or all these means. He had told them that a house divided against itself could not stand, that the Nation could not continue half slave and half free. He had told them, both North and South, that he would not override the Constitution in either case. He had pleaded with them in his sublime Inaugural to recognize their own brotherhood. He had counselled calmness of judgment and patience to work out a peaceful solution of the gigantic problem. His great heart glowed with sympathy for humanity, denying entrance to no section, neither to race, color nor creed. He asked for but one thing—veneration for the Union. Amid the gloom of approaching fratricidal war he alone took up the harp of the Union and "Smote on all the chords with might,

Smote the chord of self that trembling passed in music out of sight."

He alone was brave without boasting, patient without pretense, gentle without compromise, stern without detraction, sympathetic without weakness, sad without pessimism, tearful without despair. Other great leaders fixed their eyes on some particular star of their selection moving in the orbit of their beliefs. He alone steered his course by the one fixed star. Because he would not allow his eyes to be blinded by sympathy for one race to the exclusion of all races, he was declared heartless. Because he gave away to his advisors in a thousand minor details, he was charged with weakness. Because he would resign no hair's breadth of his authority in great things, he was labelled stubborn. Because he would not change a general in the field until he had found another who might better fill his place, he was scoffed at as being ignorant of the situation. Because he sought to strengthen the party upon which he must depend for support, he was judged as a scheming politician. Because he would not pull up the roots of his being from the soil of the common people, he was satirized as a clown. Because he, like the Man of Nazareth, taught with homely parables the great truths of life, he was frowned on by the cultured and sophisticated. Because he could not bring himself to have shot the volunteers of a newly organized army of civilians who disobeyed stern military rules, he was censured for disorganization and defeats due to the lack of military leadership. Because, like Shakespeare, he made humor the open window to let in reviving sunlight to his overcharged heart, he was sneered at as lacking in appreciation of the dignity of his high office and unappreciative of the seriousness of the hour. Because he forgave his enemies, both for and against the Union, his firmness was doubted and oftentimes his judgment denied.

This surging sea of criticism and abuse, which made his place unique and difficult beyond that of any other president, and probably beyond that of any man who was ever called to rule a people, gives authority for the conclusion of the foremost minds of succeeding generations that Abraham Lincoln, judged by his works, is the greatest figure in the drama of Civilization. Accepting all men, he conquered all men. Denied of all while denying none, he lifted all men several notches in the scale of progress and put under their feet a foundation of such everlasting substance that the structure he builded seems destined to become the cornerstone for the temple of universal freedom.

That the President venerated freedom and hated slavery, goes without saying. His whole life had been devoted to the principle of the one and to exposing the erroneous claims of the other. But he knew, by that marvelous power of intuition which was the natural result of his knowledge of the whole people and sympathy for them, that even the North as a solid whole would not continue the war on the declared proposition to free the slaves. The leading Members of his Cabinet, Seward, Chase, and later Stanton, held different views. Horace Greeley believed such a declaration would strengthen the Union cause. Beecher, Sumner, Garrison, Wendell Phillips, great orators all, were pronounced in their conviction that the war should be prosecuted with this one end in view. It is evident now that they were all wrong, and that Lincoln was wise as well as good and saw far clearer than they the great danger of such a proceeding.

His hope of keeping the border states in the Union was founded on his understanding of human nature. His frequent attempts to gain their consent to gradual emancipation with payment for their slaves, won their confidence and respect

for his honesty and by these means some of them remained loyal and were immense assets to the cause of the Federal arms. Difficult beyond conception was Lincoln's position during those first years of the Civil War. To keep the North as solidly behind him as possible he sought out their favorites in public life and gave them offices of trust and command. Loyal to his old friends, he advanced them wherever he could, so long as the public service did not suffer. Often it was a man who had been his opponent and who continued to mistrust or despise him that he pushed to the front.

Among the men whom Lincoln selected for important duty in the western field was Fremont. That the President believed in Fremont's genius for command was not strange. He had been "The Pathfinder" across the great plains and also for the Republican Party as its standard bearer in its first campaign as a National Party. Lincoln had stumped the State of Illinois for the hero of the hour and had a warm feeling in his heart for him. He placed the bulk of the western regiments under Fremont's command with headquarters at St. Louis. Fremont could not but know Lincoln's expressed decision to leave the slave question to be settled later while the greater question of saving the Union was on trial. But his abolition leanings and his unwonted ambition to lead, caused him to overlook or to ignore the President's well-defined attitude. Feeling certain of winning a large backing for his act from his admirers all over the country, and anxious to reinstate himself in the full confidence of the public eye for several costly military blunders, (one of which cost the life of the brave General Lyon), without previous consultation with the President or any of his advisers or friends, on August 30, 1861, Fremont wrote and printed, as Commander of the Department of the West, a proclamation establishing martial law throughout the State of Missouri and announcing that:



“All persons who shall be taken with arms in their hands within these lines shall be tried by court-martial and if found guilty will be shot. The property, real and personal, of all persons in the State of Missouri who shall take up arms against the United States, or who shall be directly proven to have taken an active part with their enemies in the field, is declared to be confiscated to the public use; and their slaves, if any they have, are hereby declared freemen.”

Having taken grounds so diametrically opposed to the principles of his Chief, it must have occurred to Fremont that his act entitled him to immediate dismissal. Subsequent events give color to the supposition that he courted such a climax with the intention of setting himself up as a rival in authority, possibly with the hope of dictatorship. How far he came from appreciating the wisdom, as well as the patience of Mr. Lincoln, the denouement shows. Instead of exhibiting the righteous anger which he no doubt felt for this reckless misuse of power, President Lincoln corrected like a wise schoolmaster. He immediately wrote the general:

“My Dear Sir: Two points in your proclamation of August 30 gives me some anxiety: First—should you shoot a man, according to the proclamation, the Confederates would very certainly shoot our best men in their hands, in retaliation; and so, man for man, indefinitely. It is, therefore, my order that you allow no man to be shot under the proclamation, without first having my approbation and consent.

Second—I think there is great danger that the closing paragraph in relation to the confiscation of property and the liberating slaves of traitorous owners, will alarm our southern Union friends and turn them against us; perhaps ruin our rather fair prospects of Kentucky. Allow me therefore, to ask that you will, as of your own motion, modify that para-

graph so as to conform to the first section of the Act of Congress entitled, 'An Act to Confiscate Property Used for Insurrectionary Purposes,' approved August 6, 1861, and a copy of which Act I herewith send you.

"This letter is written in a spirit of caution and not of censure. I send it by special messenger, in order that it may certainly and speedily reach you."

So wise and gentle, but withal so firm a rebuke, should have won the hearty coöperation of the impetuous general, but blinded by his passion and with his vanity pushed to its limit by the adulation of friends as blind and prejudiced as he, Fremont wrote in reply: "If I were to retract it of my own accord it would imply that I myself thought it wrong, and that I had acted without the reflection which the gravity of the point demanded."

Fremont seems not to have realized that, had his action gone unrebuked, the President—after his declaration in his Inaugural, that it was not his intention to disturb any of the Constitutional rights of the states, and his further decision that a state could not secede from the Union but was only dislocated by its insurrection—(that had Mr. Lincoln allowed Fremont's order to stand, he) the President would have been subject to the implication of being wrong, and having "acted without the reflection which the gravity of the point demanded."

Fremont soon after resigned. The President was besieged by the adorers of the dashing 'Pathfinder,' demanding his reinstatement, but the general had lost the confidence of a man who could hold no enmity, even when he had been so wickedly abused.

The embarrassments under which President Lincoln labored through such acts of ill-considered enthusiasm, were

not yet over. Don Piatt, who was Chief-of-Staff with General Schenk, stationed at Baltimore, in the absence of his Chief issued an order for General Burney who came there to recruit for a colored regiment, to recruit only slaves. He then sent Burney to that part of Maryland where slaves were thickest. His act was, as he knew, in direct opposition to the principle laid down by the President. He has since confessed that he waited until his superior officer was absent from the camp to issue the order, feeling sure the general would not listen to its being done. Piatt was called to Washington and before the President.

"I never saw Mr. Lincoln angry but this once," writes Piatt, "and I had no wish to see a second exhibition of his wrath. I do not care to recall the words of Mr. Lincoln. I wrote them out that night, for I was threatened with a shameful dismissal from the service and I intended appealing to the public. They were exceedingly sincere for the President was in a rage. I was not allowed a word in my own defense, and was only permitted to say that I would countermand my order. I was saved cashiering through the interference of Stanton and Chase, and the further fact that a row over such a transaction at that time would be extremely awkward. The President never forgave me. I do not blame him. His great, thoughtful brain saw at that time what has taken years for us to discover and appreciate. He understood the people he held to a death struggle in behalf of the great Republic, and knew that, while the masses would fight to the bitter end in behalf of the Union, they would not kill their own brothers, and spread mourning over the entire land in behalf of the Negro. He therefore kept the cause of Union to the front."

Out of a similar disregard of the President's position on the institution of slavery as affected by the war, and as the war

might be affected by it, came the resignation of Secretary Cameron. In his report as Secretary of War to the annual session of Congress which met in December, 1861, he announced: "If it should be found that the men who have been held by the rebels as slaves are capable of bearing arms and performing efficient military service, it is the right, and may become the duty, of the Government to arm and equip them, and employ their services against the rebels, under proper military regulations, discipline and command."

"Mr. Nicolay declares that "the President was not prepared to permit a member of his Cabinet, without his consent, to commit the administration to so radical a policy at that early date. He caused advance copies of the document to be recalled and modified to the simple declaration that fugitive and abandoned slaves, being clearly an important military resource, should not be returned to rebel masters, but withheld from the enemy to be disposed of in future as Congress might deem best."

Even Members of the Cabinet failed to understand that Lincoln knew the temper of the country, and disposition of the army, and the delicate strands which held the border states to the Union. The President wrote to Hon. George Bancroft, the historian, "I must deal in all due caution with this question, and with the best judgment I can bring to it."

This caution was abundantly manifested in his annual message to Congress of December 3, 1861, wherein he wrote: "In considering the policy to be adopted for suppressing the insurrection, I have been anxious and careful that the inevitable conflict for this purpose shall not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle. I have, therefore, in every case, thought it proper to keep the integrity of the Union prominent as the primary object of the contest on



our part, leaving all questions which are not of vital military importance to the more deliberate action of the Legislature.

\*\*\* The Union must be preserved; and hence all indispensable means must be employed. We should not be in haste to determine that radical and extreme measures, which may reach the loyal as well as the disloyal, are indispensable."

But neither the Fremont climax, the Piatt episode, the Cameron rebuke, nor this calm, sane declaration of the importance of sticking to the one Great Idea could curb the desire of men to rush the goal. General David Hunter, commanding the Department of the South, issued a military order which declared that:

"Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these free states, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, heretofore held as slaves are therefore declared forever free."

When the news of this proclamation reached the President, he immediately wrote to Secretary Chase, "No commanding general shall do such a thing upon my responsibility, without consulting me." Three days later he published a proclamation declaring Hunter's order entirely unauthorized and void, and adding: "I further make it known that whether it be competent for me, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, to declare the slaves of any state or states free, and whether, at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the Government to exercise that supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself, and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field. These are totally different questions from those of police regulations in armies and camps."

One after another, blind to the situation as well as to the

character of the man whose prerogatives they would usurp, he put them in their place, proceeded to undo the mischief of their futile attempts to snatch glory without achievement, and continued on his way. He allowed great liberties in little things, but none at all when there was the least attempt to usurp executive power. His responsibilities were enormous. To balance it enormous power was necessary. He was jealous of that power and reserved it for himself. With like distinct reservation of executive power and equally plain announcement of the contingency which would justify its exercise, was coupled a renewal of his plan and offer of compensated abolishment, supplemented by a powerful appeal to the public opinion of the border states.

"I do not argue," continued the proclamation, "I beseech you to make the arguments for yourselves. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partisan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the Pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently as the dews from heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as in the providence of God it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it."

With such words as these of heavenly sweetness and such inherent power, Lincoln strove to compass the desired end. While others threw a few sticks together in an effort to build a monument to their fame, he ignored fame and built a substantial bridge across which four million serfs should safely walk to freedom and manhood. He knew that if the Northern Armies were finally victorious, slavery was dead.

In another appeal to the border states some weeks later (the President) after proposing that they proceed to legislate for slavery compensation, closed with these words:

"If the war continues long, as it must if the object (to save the Union) be not sooner attained, the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of the war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it. Much of its value is gone already. How much better for you and for your people to take steps which at once shorten the war and secure substantial compensation for that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event. How much better to save this money which else we sink forever in the war \* \* \* \* \* Our common country is in great peril, demanding the loftiest views and boldest action to bring speedy relief. Once relieved, its form of government is saved to the world, its beloved history and cherished memories are vindicated, and its happy future fully assured and rendered inconceivably grand. To you, more than to any others, the privilege is given to assure that happiness and swell that grandeur, and to link your own names forever therewith."

The sentiment of the border states being divided, no action was taken. It was at this time that Mr. Lincoln decided that he must, at no distant day, as he expressed it, "play my last card." Here are his own words on the subject. In the summer of 1862 he told F. B. Carpenter, the artist, "It had got to be. Things had gone from bad to worse, until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operations we had been pursuing; that we had about played our last card, and must change our tactics, or lose the game. I now determined upon the adoption of the emancipation policy; and without consultation with, or knowledge of, the Cabinet, I prepared

the original draft of the proclamation, and after much anxious thought called a Cabinet meeting upon the subject. All were present excepting Mr. Blair, the Postmaster General, who was absent at the opening of the discussion, but came in subsequently. I said to the Cabinet that I had resolved upon this step, and had not called them together to ask their advice, but to lay the subject matter of the proclamation before them, suggestions of which would be in order after they had heard it."

It was on July 22, 1862, that the President read to his Cabinet the draft of his final proclamation, which, after a formal warning against continuing the rebellion, was in the following words:

"And I hereby make known that it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure for tendering pecuniary aid to the free choice or rejection of any and all states which may then be recognizing and practically sustaining the authority of the United States, and which may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, gradual abolishment of slavery within such State or States; that the object is to practically restore, thenceforward to be maintained, the constitutional relation between the general government and each and all the States, do order and declare that on the first day of January, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-Three, all persons held as slaves within any State or States within the constitutional authority of the United States shall not then be practically recognized, submitted to, and maintained, shall then, thenceforward, and forever be free."

The Cabinet expressed divers opinions. Blair thought it would cost the administration the fall election. Chase pre-



ferred that emancipation should be proclaimed by commanders in the several military districts. Seward, approving the measure, suggested that it be postponed until it could be given to the country supported by a military success, instead of issuing it, as would be the case then, upon the greatest disaster of the war. Mr. Lincoln's recital continues: "The wisdom of the view of the Secretary of State struck me with very great force. It was an aspect of the case that in all my thought upon the subject, I had entirely overlooked. The result was I put the draft proclamation aside, as you do your sketch for a picture, waiting for victory."

While the President waited for the favorable moment he was assailed most bitterly on every hand. Misrepresentation by opposition newspapers he could afford to overlook, but when Horace Greeley printed in the New York Tribune an "open letter" ostentatiously addressed to Mr. Lincoln, full of unjust censure, all based on the general accusation that the President and many army officers as well, were neglecting their duty under pro-slavery influences and sentiments, Mr. Lincoln replied at once:

Executive Mansion,

August 22, 1862,

Hon. Horace Greeley,

Dear Sir: *See the number in Lincoln's collected letters.*

I have just read yours of the nineteenth, addressed to myself through the New York Tribune. If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "true Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could, at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could, at the same time, destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views as fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN.

With the desired proclamation in his desk and the desire in his heart to publish it, he was forced by the danger of the situation to accept the pressure and abuse from radicals

everywhere. On September 13, he was visited by an influential deputation from the religious denominations of Chicago, urging him to issue at once a proclamation of universal emancipation. Courteously, but with an understanding of the matter and with a knowledge of his previous action and his future intentions, he answered them with true Lincoln wisdom, his argument being one of his direct, unanswerable statements.

"I am approached," he said, "with most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men, who are equally certain that they represented the Divine Will. I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps, in some respects, both. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His Will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me. \* \* \* What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet. \* \* \* I view this matter as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion."

Four days after this interview the battle of Antietam was fought, and when after a few days of uncertainty it was ascertained that it could be reasonably claimed a Union victory, the President resolved to carry out his long mature purpose.

Lincoln came at last to the Emancipation Proclamation, came to it by such well lighted roads, and with such high and holy steps that, in his own words it came as "gently as the dews from heaven, not rending or wrecking anything." It came to be irrevocably joined to the Union which its promul-

gation at an earlier date might have destroyed. It came after Lincoln had long striven to show the owners of slaves an easier way, a way which as he told them would have given to them the undying glory that will forever crown the brow and illumine his name as the Great Emancipator.

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*Chapter XVIII*

## RED FIELDS OF WAR

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IN THE SPRING of '61 the wrinkled front of war was to be smoothed in three months. But it was not so. Before a year went by there were under arms, North and South, at least half a million men. General McClellan with the Army of the Potomac commanded the largest army that the world had ever seen, more than 200,000 men reporting for duty. Union generals in other departments had armies of from 20,000 to 30,000 men and these sometimes were joined in battle under their separate commanders forming a force of upwards of 100,000.

Besides these great armies there was good fighting going on all the way from the Atlantic seaboard to the foothills of the Rockies. Cavalry brigades acting almost independently fought heroic engagements. Wild riders from the great plains, an entire regiment mounted on white horses sweeping down from the plateaus of Colorado to clash in sabre encounters with Quantrel and his equally wild and adventurous riders from the field of Missouri and the far stretched prairies of Texas; detachments of both North and South fighting back and forth across the border throughout Missouri; Indian regiments recruited in the Indian Territory for both sides dashing into the barbarous conflict; all this gave a romantic color to the fringe of the struggle outside the great armies assembled

and assembling from the Mississippi to the plains before Washington.

While McClellan, with a Napoleon's ambition to win the war with one stupendous battle in the Peninsula, was calling for more men and more men to make success certain when he should move, Grant, with untrained troops formed of regiments from Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio—not soldiers, merely, but patriots one and all—with dogged determination drove forward, taking Fort Henry and Fort Donnelson, Pittsburg Landing, and, finally investing Vicksburg, roused the Nation to cheering enthusiasm with his unconditional surrender demands, in reply to requests for an armistice.

A West Pointer with a record of cool bravery and ability in the Mexican War as a Lieutenant, Grant found little encouragement from the politicians in Illinois when from a small tannery at Galena he offered his services to the Union. Finally given a commission as Colonel of Volunteers by the Governor of Illinois, he drilled his men and got into action without delay. He moved on like some ponderable substance propelled by its own weight until after his capture of Donnelson, when Lincoln recognized his energy and indomitable courage and made him a Major General of Volunteers. Under Halleck, who had command of the Department of Missouri, he won his battles. Halleck took credit to himself for the territory and forts gained, and Grant, close mouthed, grim, taciturn, asked for no promotion but only for victories.

Before Washington, lay McClellan's own army of 200,000 well-fed, well-equipped, perfectly drilled soldiers, fretting for action. Action came, but so manipulated under division commanders jealous for preferment and willing only to win when they, and not their brother generals should be credited with

victory, that successful engagements were allowed to lapse into drawn battles or general defeats. Out of this tangled skein of selfish ambitions, with General McClellan himself the chief offender, grew up that strange controversy between the General-in-Chief of all the Armies and the Administration which, as is well seen today, prolonged the war and cost the Nation immeasurable blood and treasure.

Lincoln, the civilian from the Illinois prairies, with no military training beyond that of a Captain of a few volunteers in the Black Hawk War, now Commander-in-Chief of all the Union Armies, was the rock against which beat the storm of criticism for McClellan's refusal to move his army until he should have a force so large as to overwhelm the enemy. This criticism also came from officers and soldiers in the field who had somehow come to look upon McClellan as the one military genius of war. Backed by this unaccountable worship of the soldiers, McClellan grew every day more arrogant and felt his gorge rise with every suggestion of the President that he move upon the enemy. His troops were so numerous, so altogether fit, and had such stores of arms and supplies, that Lincoln's patience was tried to the limit to see them inactive in their miles of white tents before the Capitol, while the Southern Armies ravaged the fair fields of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and sometimes threatened Washington. At one time, despairing of getting McClellan to use the magnificent army which the country had freely given him, Lincoln said:

"If McClellan is not going to use his army I should like to borrow it for a little while."

Could he have done so, there is no doubt now of the practical use to which he would have put it. Not being able to take the army himself, and knowing of no other military man in



the service sufficiently equipped with experience and the confidence of the country with which to replace him, the President was compelled to support the picturesque McClellan against the attacks of Congress. As often as the demand was made of the President to take supreme command away from Little Mack, just so often he interrogated the critics with, "Very well, but who would you put in his place?"

The answer was never more definite than, "Oh, anybody, but get rid of him."

McClellan was a genius for organization. He took the raw recruits from the farms and shops and speedily made them into legions which showed on dress parade with the best troops that any military nation had ever known. They were not dress parade soldiers either, as was proved whenever they had an opportunity to get into action. Lee, Johnson, Beauregard, when they brought their armies in front of those volunteers won no secure victory. They found their northern brothers as brave, active, patient, sturdy and self-sacrificing in the field as the most chivalric of the Southern Armies. McClellan had made an army of splendid proportions from the men given him, just as the southern generals had made such armies of the men recruited from the cotton and border states. They were Americans all, and gave such accounts of themselves upon every battle field of the war as to make them heroes of the first order in the pages of history.

What the Army of the Potomac lacked was a Commander who could take the army from McClellan and use it with courage and skill. Lincoln's fable, recited to Grant when he finally gave him command of all the Union Armies, is the most illuminating criticism of McClellan that has been offered in all the volumes that have been written pro and con concerning that unfortunate general.



"Once," said Lincoln, "the animals were threatened with other animals led by a dragon of some kind. They had no leader and called for someone to step forward and take command. The monkey offered himself with the proviso that they should lengthen his tail. This was done and he went forth but soon returned to say that his tail was not yet long enough. They gave him more tail and he went forth again with the same result. He kept calling for more tail which was furnished him until at last the tail grew so long and heavy that he could not handle it on the ground and it had to be wrapped about his neck. Then he found himself so weighted down that he could not move at all."

McClellan got his immense army but had not the genius to command it to any degree of concerted action. He lacked the confidence in himself and the determination to conquer against odds, which are among the chief attributes of a great commander. In his attempt to argue himself out of this state of mind he began by crediting his opponents with superior forces. The more he was urged to advance the more he resorted to this excuse. He was always going to move, was always on the point of winning a great victory, but was never quite ready because he was outnumbered by the enemy, the weather was not propitious, he needed extra guns of a kind not to be had immediately. His reiteration of these erroneous statements finally convinced his officers and men that they were true and he thus kept their worship, when in fact, had they known the truth, they would have lost confidence in him.

While the armies in the West were winning, and the armies of the East were fighting indecisive battles, Farragut ran the blockade at New Orleans and with his brave sailors captured the city. Other adventurous commanders ran the blockades on the Mississippi, until the river was open from its source

to the sea with the exception of the fortified forts at Vicksburg, which were considered impregnable by the Confederacy. Lincoln, with the eyes of a seer, his heart bleeding in sympathy with the mangled and dead on a hundred battlefields, saw all, heard all, deliberated sanely on all that was transpiring over that tremendous amphitheatre, the largest battlefield the world up to that time, had known. He found time from the stress and strain of administration affairs, from the press of political appointment, from the intrigues of ambition, and from the pleas of distracted relatives for their wounded, imprisoned, or saddest of all, deserters condemned to be shot, to become familiar with the movements of the armies everywhere, and the country over which they were acting or likely to act. He learned the personal qualifications of officers, big and little, and was, before the end of the second year of the war, so proficient in his task of mastering the military situation, that he did not hesitate to offer plans of attack and defense to the most astute commander. He saw that the states were kept informed of the needs of the government, and when opportunity presented itself, discussed with citizens from distant points, the issues of the war, speaking with simplicity, and displaying deep sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of the people. He did not remove himself from the masses by dress, manner, speech or reasoning. His letters to politicians were wise, with the wisdom gained in those old Illinois political contests, and his evident pride in bodily strength and his delight in hearty humor strengthened the chords that bound him to the great pulsing heart of common humanity, as these same qualities had made him the loved and respected companion of the pioneers of Gentryville. Always the kingdom he sought to conquer was the human heart.

To appreciate Lincoln truly he must be conceived at the outset as the Universal Man. In early life, the companion of the coarse and vulgar, he was ever gentle and considerate, able to handle pitch without being defiled. In the White House occupying the highest office in the greatest of modern nations, surrounded by sophistication of every degree, he never became sophisticated. Given unprecedented power he used it with malice toward none, charity for all. Bitterly used and persecuted, he returned no bitterness, resorted to no persecution. Wiser than the wisest, firmer than the firmest, gentler than the gentlest, plainer than the plainest; unmatched in humor, unwearied in patience, neither deceived by pretension nor flattered by servility; meeting prince and plebeian upon the same lofty height of equality in heart and soul, respecting the opinions of others, but holding firmly to his own, slow to wrath but terrible in judgment. He moved in the National cataclysm like the central figure in a Greek Tragedy, at once the companion and the ruling spirit of the groping folk struggling on in the galling harness of destiny to some well-appointed end.

Philosophers, psychics, mystics have written volumes to prove the universality of life and man's closeknit brotherhood with all nature's phenomena. But it was not the study of abstruse doctrine that prompted the boy Lincoln, when the family were emigrating to Indiana, to return through the icy waters of a river to bring across a dog that had been left shivering on the hither shore; or to leave his horse when riding the circuit to pull a hog from a quagmire and set it free on firm ground; or to stop in a crowd on the street of Gentryville where a drunkard was being made sport of, to soften the hearts of the practical jokers with a fable and to walk away, when their good humor was established, with the vic-

tim of their thoughtlessness for his companion. It was not a study of doctrine or creed that prompted him to throw his long arm affectionately over the shoulder of the angry Secretary of the Treasury and pace slowly up and down the room in silence until the indomitable will of Chase had melted in the warmth of his Chief's undoubted affection. It was Lincoln's own large appreciation of the truths the seers in all ages had proclaimed, that prompted his acts of sympathy, acts recorded in hundreds by those who witnessed them or were the subjects of them, and which made him faithful disciples of such great men as Douglas, Seward, Chase, Stanton, in parliamentary life, and of Grant, Sherman, Halleck, Butler in the field, and of Walt Whitman in the realm of the soul.

It was his large sympathy with the life of all created things that inspired his divine utterance, "In the right to eat the bread his hands have earned, the Negro is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas or of any man." It was this large, clear understanding of the sacredness of life, and the weakness as well as the strength of the human will, that made him so ready to save the soldier boy who had fallen asleep on guard or even deserted on the field of battle. He despised cowardice. He appreciated courage. But he knew men. He knew that one who would, under certain circumstances, fail to live up to his highest conception of duty, under different circumstances might rise above it. He knew the necessity of Divine support, because he found himself so often in need of it, so often tempted beyond his own human powers, and he acknowledged his indebtedness to such help and guidance in every state document and in every letter of sympathy and condolence written to others in affliction. Into his own intimate life there were crowded from childhood experiences of



tragic depth and fateful sequence. And in those dark hours when the red fields of battle swam before his eyes, and while his heart was wrung with pity and horror, in a darkened chamber of the White House, bearing the fears and woes of a great Nation, he walked through the valley of shadow by the side of his son and playmate, and the tears that dimmed his eyes for the griefs of others were mingled with the grief of his own irremedial loss.

Yet withal he never faltered. He faced National and individual crises with a courage and fortitude that made him colossal in the eyes of those who stood near him during those awful days. Nicolay, his Private Secretary, says that he bore a front so brave and a spirit so sublime that even the Members of his Cabinet who were most often with him were inspired with his calm and grew in faith to be finer and truer men. He seems never to have forgotten that as head of the Nation, his mission was to hold up to all those associated with him in the great fight the light of loyalty to that cause which he conceived to be the cause of humanity. Whether it was a backwoods delegation come to shake hands with their old friend and neighbor, a Rachel weeping for her children, a group of politicians, an army council, a Cabinet meeting, or a wounded soldier on a hospital cot, he bore himself like a leader whose powers were centered in one supreme endeavor. Nor did he find fault with fate, no matter how he might be flaunted. He bore with the frailties and vanities of others, either civil or military, without complaint and with no wish to return upon them. Whatever the offense, he was not offended.

On one occasion General McClellan kept him waiting in the anteroom of his headquarters for nearly an hour after the President had sent in his card, and coming out finally excused

himself as having some immediate duty to perform and went away leaving the President without an interview. A correspondent who was witness to this lack of breeding and show of insubordination on the part of the General to his Chief, exclaimed with heat:

“How can you put up with it?”

Lincoln said quietly, “I’ll hold Mack’s horse for him if only he will win battles.”

Lincoln was as brave physically as he was spiritually. General Butler gives an account of Lincoln’s visit to his headquarters. The President desired to ride along the lines and see the soldiers.

“I happened to have a very tall, easy-riding, pacing horse and as the President was rather long-legged I tendered him the use of it while I rode beside him on a pony. He was dressed as was his custom, in a black suit, and tall silk hat. As there rode on the other side of him at first Mr. Fox, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, who was not more than five feet six, Mr. Lincoln stood out as the central figure of the group. When we got to the line of intrenchments, from which the line of rebel pickets was not more than 300 yards, he towered high above the works, and as we came to the several encampments the boys all turned out and cheered lustily. The enemy’s attention was directed to the performance, and with the glass it could be plainly seen that the eyes of their officers were fastened upon Lincoln.

“‘Let us ride on the side next to the enemy, Mr. President,’ said Butler. You are in fair rifle shot of them and they may open fire; and they must know you, being the only person not in uniform, and the cheering of the troops directs their attention to you.’

“‘Oh, no,’ he said, laughing, ‘the Commander-in-Chief

of the Army must not show any cowardice in the presence of his soldiers, whatever he may feel.'

"And he insisted upon riding the whole six miles, which was about the length of my intrenchments, in that position."

Having finished the ride the President turned off to visit the hospitals, and General Butler recounts how the President passed through all the wards, "stopping and speaking very kindly to some of the poor fellows as they lay on their cots and occasionally administering words of commendation to the ward master. Sometimes when reaching a patient who showed much suffering, the President's eyes would glisten with tears. The effect of his presence upon those sick men was wonderful and his visit did great good, for there was no medicine which could equal the cheerfulness he so largely inspired."

General Butler accompanied the President to Fort Monroe where they had dinner. The General, noticing that the President was preoccupied and ate little of the good dinner provided, said, "I hope you are not unwell; you do not eat, Mr. President?"

"I am well enough," was the reply, "but would to God this dinner or provisions like it were with our poor prisoners in Andersonville."

Butler was a strict disciplinarian and had several arguments with the President, who, he says, frequently commuted sentences of death. One day Butler took a record of a court martial wherein he had approved a sentence of death but upon reflection wished to have the sentence revoked. He called upon the President, laid the record down before him, and in a few words explained it. The President looked up and said: "You asking me to pardon some poor fellow! Give me that pen."

"And," concludes Butler, "in less time than I can tell it the pardon was ordered without further investigation."

Mr. Lincoln found time to console many people to whom the war brought its personal tragedy. Among the rarest and dearest of these is a letter written to Mrs. Bixby, rare for its excellence as a prose composition, and dear, not only to the one to whom it is addressed but to all the world for its perfect expression of thought and feeling. He wrote:

"Dear Madam: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

The war ground on. North and South poured their best manhood into the ever-depleting ranks. Field after field, hotly contested, revealed heroism born of the American spirit not unsurpassed by the heroism of the days of ancient Greece. Great armies swung back and forth through the valleys between Washington and Richmond. Those of the Confederacy under the general command of Lee with skilled and heroic lieutenants supporting him and all acting in concert, had one end in view—to win decisively on some great battlefield with the hope of opening a way to the Capital of the Union. The



armies of the North under McClellan, considerably outnumbering the enemy, lacked the unity of leadership which made the Confederate troops so formidable. They also labored under the disadvantage of being on the defensive most of the time. McClellan had no superior in making an army fit, but was denied the vision to contemplate actions *en masse* with superior calmness and the moral courage to stake all on a single important engagement. The dogged determination of Grant in the West finally put Vicksburg under siege. When it fell, The Father of Waters, as Lincoln said, once more flowed unobstructed to the sea, and the President summoned the new star in the military skies to Washington and gave him command of all the Union troops with orders to take Richmond. Meanwhile Meade won the great battle of Gettysburg and made the Capital safe from invasion. McClellan's Peninsular Campaign was abandoned and Grant set about the overthrow of Lee by a direct movement toward Richmond, the Capital of the Confederacy.

In the White House Lincoln and his Cabinet Members carried on the Civil Government, supplied the never ceasing call for men and the money, two millions a day, for their equipment and support. Another election was approaching and ambitious men looked with eager eyes on the Presidential Chair. Secretary Chase had already inaugurated a campaign for the nomination. When Lincoln's advisers reproached him for keeping a man in his Cabinet who was using his office for political ends in competition with his Chief, the President replied that Chase was a big man, bigger by half than any man he had ever known, and if the people wanted his Secretary of the Treasury for President, they should have him. All he asked of Chase was his best endeavors to save the Union. That having been accomplished other things would adjust themselves.

Not that Lincoln did not desire re-election. He had given his whole soul to the task of saving the Republic for the people. The end was now certain. The preponderance of men and means in the United States, with such a military machine as had at last been built up and got under way, must certainly crush the forces of the Confederacy now reduced to the last extremities for money, supplies and munitions, and so shut off from the world by a perfect blockade that recognition from any foreign power was despaired of. But the heroic spirit of the South had lost none of its fire and determination. It still glowed with all the zeal for its mistaken ideal that in '61 had swept it into rebellion. Love of home gave ever renewed strength to its troops and caused their hearts to swell with hot pride and resentment against the approach of an invading army. As Lincoln had said in his Cincinnati speech before his election, the sons of the South and the sons of the North were equally brave and chivalrous. The side that could count the greatest numbers must win in the end. But the victors would have conquered a foe equally brave, equally generous, equally fertile in expedients—their brother Americans.

It was this deep, sympathetic understanding of the nobleness of American character that inspired those magnificent Inaugurals, and those many brave appeals to the men of the South to meditate upon the issue, to put aside passion and deliberate. "Come and let us reason together," was the substance of his every utterance to the men of the South. But when at last there was no longer any hope for reconciliation, when both sides had mustered the largest armies of history and were joined in a death grapple on many bloody fields, he believed in striking blows of force, and like the skilled wrestler he was, to follow up every advantage gained in at-

tack. He respected his antagonist as much or more than McClellan had, but unlike McClellan he did not overrate his enemy's prowess nor underrate his own.

It was his cultivated judgment that helped him mightily in weighing the chances for success, both in the field of war and the field of administration. Whether it were Lee or Beauregard or Stonewall Jackson he was facing, or Fremont or McClellan or Chase who were gathering their forces to secure their ascendancy and his own defeat, he measured their qualities, their characters, their abilities, the justice of their cause for or against his own, and stood his ground, alert, active, receptive, calm with a sense of superior power born of the clear knowledge that he was in the right and that his training for such contests had been going on since first he toddled a barefoot child over the puncheon floor of the cabin and listened to the simple but lofty teachings of his gentle mother.

And still the war ground on. Grant, hanging on the flanks of Lee's withdrawing army, forced the only general of the era worthy to oppose him slowly backward until the fall of Richmond was easily prophesied. Sherman started from Atlanta on his famous march to the sea.

When a crowd about the Capitol asked the President, "What news from Sherman?"

The President replied, "We have no recent advices. We know where he went in but we cannot tell where he is going to come out,"—one of those happy truths that causes the gloomy spirits of a crowd to disperse and in their stead the smiles of hope appear.

The battlefield of Gettysburg was dedicated as a soldier's burying ground and the President delivered on that occasion the greatest historic document and most heartfelt song of

sacrificial heroism and call to perseverance in the right, compressed into the smallest compass, that has ever stamped the pages of Literature.

The election of '64 came and the sad faced man in the White House was given the assurance which must have been doubly sweet to his over troubled heart, that the Great Plain People believed in him, respected him, loved him, and understood him to have fought for them, to be still fighting for them, and through them for all the great plain people of the world. Men who had been heroes of the hour, Chase, McClellan, Fremont, men whom he had signally honored and trusted, but who were not of that large-souled nature to understand him nor the people whom he loved and trusted, found too late that those people whose natures they failed to sound had the broader vision; they found themselves set gently aside. The people not forgetting their worth and many achievements but measuring them by the worth and achievements of Lincoln, had found them wanting in those qualities of nobility which proclaimed his greatness. So they gave him their suffrages, unanimous at nomination and by tremendous majorities at the election. He had been faithful, not only in great things, but in little things, they said. Let him complete the work.

His second Inaugural attained the highest point in Lincoln's genius for expressing universal truths and at the same time revealed that the demands of a terrible war with all its hardening influences and fearful responsibilities, had not hardened his heart but had softened it and filled it to overflowing with love for his fellowmen. "With malice toward none, with charity for all"—so he stood and so he spoke, not words of sublimity and beauty only, but words out of the depths of his being, the revelation of himself to all mankind.



He revealed himself on November 9th in answer to a sere-nade: "I am thankful to God for this approval of the people; but, while deeply grateful for this mark of their confidence in me, if I know my heart, my gratitude is free from any taint of personal triumph. I do not impugn the motives of any one opposed to me. It is no pleasure to me to triumph over any one, but I give thanks to the Almighty for this evidence of the people's resolution to stand by free government and the rights of humanity."

Again on November 10th, he responds: "It has long been a grave question whether any government, not too strong for the liberties of its people, can be strong enough to maintain its existence in great emergencies. On this point the present rebellion brought our Republic to a severe test, and a presidential election occurring in regular course during the rebellion, added not a little to the strain.

"If the loyal people united were put to the utmost of their strength by the rebellion, must they not fail when divided and partially paralyzed by a political war among themselves? But the election was a necessity. We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us. The strife of the election is but human nature practically applied to the facts of the case. What has occurred in this case must ever recur in similar cases. Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good. Let us, therefore, study the incidents of this as philosophy to learn wisdom from, and none of them as wrongs to be revenged. But the election, along with its incidental and undesirable strife, has done good too. It has demonstrated that

a people's government can sustain a national election in the midst of a great civil war. Until now, it has not been known to the world that this is a possibility. It shows also, how sound and how strong we still are. It shows that, even among candidates of the same Party, he who is most devoted to the Union and most opposed to treason can receive most of the people's votes. It shows, also, to the extent yet unknown, that we have more men now than we had when the war began. Gold is good in its place, but living, brave, patriotic men are better than gold.

"But the rebellion continues, and now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country? For my own part, I have striven and shall strive to avoid placing any obstacle in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom. While I am deeply sensible to the high compliment of a re-election, and duly grateful as I trust, to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think, for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result.

"May I ask those who have not differed from me to join with me in this same spirit towards those who have? And now let me close by asking three hearty cheers for our brave soldiers and seamen and their gallant and skillful commanders."

Richmond fell. At Appomattox, under the famous apple tree, Lee surrendered to Grant and received in return the grandest benison ever bestowed by a conqueror on a fallen foe! "Let us have peace."

Lincoln visited the Capital of the fallen Confederacy, not as a conquering hero bringing chains of servitude and humiliation but as a man of mercy appearing to soothe the fears and

quell the anguish of breaking hearts. Correspondents accompanying the President's party tell of Lincoln's remarkable simplicity, his sad, fatherly bearing as he viewed the wreck and devastation of the beautiful old city, but most of all of the overflowing adoration of the Negroes who crowded about "Massa Linkum," shouting "Glory! Glory!" "Bress de Lord! Bress de Lord!"

Their Moses who had led them out of the wilderness was before them. The tropical exuberance of their joy knew no bounds. They were drunk with ecstasy. They leaped and ran for joy, like the lame man healed by the Nazarene, and with far more reason. They kissed one another, hugged their nearest fellow to their hearts, surging in groups about the tall, sad man contemplating them with a countenance of spiritual tenderness.

Charles Carleton Coffin tells of one old Negro wearing a few rags, "whose white, crisp hair appeared through his crownless straw hat," who lifted the hat, bared his head, kneeled upon the ground, clasped his hands and cried, "May de good Lord bress and keep you safe, Massa President Linkum." Mr. Lincoln lifted his own hat and bowed to the old man. The moisture gathered in his eyes. He brushed the tears away and the procession moved on.

With such scenes frequently occurring, the President concluded his visit. He had received the fullest measure of return for his life-long devotion to the liberty of man, the unmeasured blessings of those humble freemen. His work was done. A few days and the news of his assassination spread like a dark cloud over all the land. A world halted to lay tribute on his grave. The Captain of the Army of Human Rights had departed. The world was hushed and still.

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## *Chapter XIX*

# LINCOLN A PRESENT POWER

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**H**UMANITY is ever bound to a mighty struggle for the preservation of those ideals it has won from its grosser passions through the action of its God-like attributes. History records nothing but the initial scenes and the culminating climaxes in this endless drama. It has its playful humors, its periods of peaceful advance, its brief hours of joy and bliss, its wars of passion and its sublime, if solemn, closes. The Seasons seem to have been instituted divinely for the instruction of man so that he may be kept to the task of bringing back from the Winter of destruction, the bloom of Spring, the Summer of development, and the Fall of fruitage. From its point of vantage above these phenomena of Nature, humanity may see its own struggle mirrored and take council of that Book of Life to persevere under all circumstances, confident that if Nature can redeem herself from seeming annual death and destruction, man, given not only superior powers of strength and resistance, but a rational ability to use his faculties in his own much higher field of the seasons of the mind, can also redeem himself.

But mankind, like nature in its physical aspects, needs and must have help and guidance from some Superior Intelligence to be led upon a higher way to greater usefulness and beauty. The rose has been glorified by the application of principles



to its primal nature, principles discovered and developed by man's powers of rational comparison and application of laws inherent in the constitution of the rose itself. This is as true in the animal as in the floral kingdom. In another direction man has applied the discovery of these principles so that he has captured and made his servants those higher and still little known so-called finer forces. Man stands on a middle ground, in close sympathy with the living forms of nature, from the molecule of animal life and the tiny seed in vegetable life, to the comrade that walks at his elbow and is cognizant of the feelings of himself and others. He is also on the borderland of the mysterious, dealing with those elements that constitute the hidden forces of the universe. The former he develops to higher forms of existence, the latter he lays hold of and harnesses to assist him in his endeavors to make a better and a more beautiful world.

Man has ideas, hopes and aspirations for himself and his race. But he is ever developing, not a perfectly developed being. He finds himself everywhere in need of a guide to advancement. As yet he is able to see but as through a glass darkly. Often he imagines himself pursuing a road that will lead to happiness for himself and others, only to discover that he has been following a blind trail which leads into a cave of gloom, or at least into the house of disappointment. Individually, or as groups or nations, this is the record from ancient Egypt until the present hour. But as out of fruit cultivation there comes at times a superior and individual type, conforming in all ways to its ancestral family, but of finer flavor and more delicate substance than has hitherto been known, so with the family of man, there occasionally emerges from the mass a being of superior mould, with keener appreciation of the things of life and greater powers of leadership.

If he be gifted with those qualities which make for greatness alone, he may rise to eminence, but his works may be detrimental to the general advancement of mankind and he may leave the world, having contributed little or nothing to its happiness. If he is good as well as great, then he proves a blessing, and his thoughts and acts become inspirations to all who may come after him.

Abraham Lincoln may be said to have been born good and great. He can hardly be accounted for in any other way. He saw the light on the borderline between the free and slave states. His youthful ears were assailed by the arguments of men of both parties. He grew to manhood in the same environment. From the time he was old enough to reason at all, until he gave up his life on the altar of truth and justice, he was beset by difficulties which must have appalled a soul not great in itself. He had none of the advantages of the universities, or of private instructors whose studies had taken them to the heights of larger speculation. His companions were rude and uncultured. He met with defeat and disappointment at the outset of every endeavor to find a firm footing for rational thought and action. Yet out of each of these defeats, he gained the sweets of victory. Out of adversity he drew the milk upon which his hungry mind and soul fed, and so found strength for other endeavors. Never was man tried more frequently and under greater difficulties. Never did man face those trials with greater courage and equanimity. Never was man more continually offered the easiest way. And never was man less inclined to succumb to the temptation to be satisfied with the life of his careless fellows, nor more ambitious to rise and to lift them with him to the heights.

That he did rise, that he did lift, not only the companions

of his days, but the broader life of the Nation, and finally the life of the whole world, none will deny. That he came to the world with a soul already prepared for the work, those who will, may doubt, but that from his first act to his last he was governed by such a soul, cannot in reason be denied.

What was Lincoln's work and how did he accomplish it? Was it to free the slaves? Was it to save the Union? Was it not rather to demonstrate to his own time, and to all time, the dignity of manhood, the supreme duty of man to his fellows? In his strong arms he gathered all races of men and all classes of men. King or commoner, he took them to his bosom. In his great heart he gave them a home and the food of love. He hated injustice and institutions and conventions founded on injustice. He saw no beauty in silken robes bought with the sweat of unpaid labor. He saw no glory in a throne on which sat a monarch who ate the bread of his toiling subjects and gave them a stone. He saw no religion in the pulpit where eternal salvation was proclaimed, and present oppression upheld and practiced. He saw no delicacy in the dainty hand on which shone the jewels dug from a mine by serfs scourged to their tasks. He saw no permanency in political institutions which did not consider first of all and finally the laborer by whose product the institution was sustained. He hated cant and hypocrisy. He despised delicacy that was indelicate, refinement which coarsened the refiner, pity that degraded the subject of pity, and sophistry that proclaimed a principle for wrong, equal to the principle for right. He hated wrong with the healthy hatred of a great intelligence trained in a thousand fierce encounters to depend upon itself. Injustice he denied any place in the scheme of life. Yet intolerance was not an element in his nature. It was requisite to his reasoning, not rooted in it. Love was the keynote of his

being. He could not live without love. He could not pass a day without some touch of hand, some glance of eye, some gesture, which might convey his sympathy for a companion, a friend, or it might be a stranger who his lively sense of sorrow told him was in need of such friendly ministrations. His compassion did not rest with the individual but shone forth like the sun upon the whole world.

This universal sympathy made Lincoln the great exemplar of Democracy. Right with him was not a principle composed by man, but the fundamental corner stone in the temple of God. To him, loyalty to truth meant loyalty to God. If a man were not honest, how could he approach the Throne of Honesty? If a man were not loving how could he kneel before the Throne of Love? If a man were not just how could he pray for justice? If a man were not loyal, how could he believe in loyalty or hope to profit by it?

Loyalty to Truth in all things, that was Lincoln's ruling motive. The urge of a great ideal was ever active in his heart, crowding his brain and glowing from his eyes. Loyal to himself, loyal to his family, loyal to man, loyal to the Union, loyal to God.

Living under the Constitution of the United States, his unblemished loyalty prompted him to adhere firmly to every tenet of that instrument. Convinced that freedom was the God-given right of every man, he was yet willing to leave slavery in those states where the Constitution had left it; but he fought with all his power against introducing it into the Territories from which the Constitution had excluded it. Imbued with the idea that good is permanent and evil temporary, he held that slavery confined to the original slave states must perish of its own volition. But when the time came for a choice as to emancipating the slaves by the



authority granted him under the Constitution as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army in time of war, he embraced it, and issued a document richer in blessings to the human race than the Constitution itself.

Lincoln was loyal to the Constitution of the Government. He was honest in his interpretation of it, and the destiny that shapes our ends made him the author of another proclamation of freedom of higher import still. Groups of men assembled to compose the Magna Charta, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. Lincoln alone, without advice, conceived, brought forth and established the Emancipation Proclamation, the religion of free labor, a document of such inherent force as to crowd out the lie in the Declaration confirmed in the Constitution which, while proclaimed all men born free and equal, yet made provision for the ownership of men in the states where slavery already existed. Then sounding a still loftier note, he gave voice to the Gettysburg Address which proclaims the freedom of all men, high and low, rich and poor, White, Red and Black, from the shackles of selfishness, leading them to move like gods in a world of universal helpfulness.

Of all those who have achieved distinction by the popular vote of the people, Lincoln is in himself the best example of freedom. Men generally are owned by their material possessions or by their desires for sensual gratification. Lincoln, reared among people whose principal ambition was to own land, invested his meager savings in books and found in the pages of Epictetus, himself a Greek slave, the proclamation of freedom in his own will to do right, which no bodily torture could force him to resign, and which the hands of man could never touch or defile. He early saw that men who set their minds on the accumulation of riches have already resigned

their wills to a master. He stood by his will to do right, to proclaim justice, to delight in knowledge and the companionship of men. He refused to believe in the power of material things to add to his stature as a man. His clothing was of the plainest and owed no form to fashion. He ate and slept according to the needs of nature, not to tickle the palate with dainty food or to wallow in downy luxury. In the most strenuous months at the White House he went to live in the Old Sailors' Home, because comparison of the elegance of the Presidential Mansion, with the bare discomforts of the camps and marches, and the cruel starvation of Andersonville, made sick his sympathetic soul. He would not yield his freedom of individuality to the conventions of his high office. At times he discussed grave matters of state with Members of his Cabinet, with Congressmen, Senators, and Foreign Diplomats, in faded dressing gown and slippers, his native dignity unimpaired. Stripped to a single garment, Abraham Lincoln would still have been the richest man of his time, as rich as any man of any time, because he steadfastly refused to allow his soul to be bound, although by so doing he might win the whole world.

"The tyrant," said Epictetus, "may crush my limbs. Has he touched my will? He may cut my head from my shoulders. Has he taken anything from me?" So Lincoln. His eyes were fixed on the things of the spirit and toward them he made his way, no matter how thorny or rugged the path. He remained free to this because he refused to become a slave to anything that smelled of morality. With Socrates, he could say to those who would master him, "You can do anything you like with me if you can lay hold on me."

What boy, however humbly born, however pinched by poverty, however environed by ignorance and grossness, but

may be inspired by Lincoln to set his feet upon an upward road and persevere to the end? To win he has only to adopt Lincoln's attitude toward life; possibly not to win in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of his own soul under whose steady gaze he must stand continually, every day and every hour, for judgment. King, philosopher, statesman, scientist, mechanic, farmer, street sweeper, every individual may declare his freedom and demonstrate it after the manner of Abraham Lincoln, by resolving to have full partnership with the result of his toil, extracting from such partnership the full measure of its meaning as a projection of the creative impulse, and of its still larger meaning in its bearing on the whole life of the world.

Chips that flew from the blows of his woodman's ax became winged messengers, pregnant with ideas, on voyages of discovery, as full of meaning to him as the voyage of Columbus over uncharted seas. The logs he hewed were alive with the sentiments of the home of which they were to become an integral part. The flatboat he constructed was rich with promises of knowledge to be gained. He made of his merchandise in the little country store a couch on which he rested to drink in the wisdom of the "glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." He was always a free man and came and went on journeys over the earth, and into the hearts of men, with as strong a flight and as direct a course as the migrating denizens of the air on their annual journeys.

Today, the Union that Lincoln loved and did so much to preserve, is again on the borders of division, with the same class consciousness appearing under a different guise, but scarcely less threatening than that which brought on the struggle of '61-65. Men in great numbers have surrendered their freedom of will to do right, to their disposition to accu-

mulate material things. Men of superb intelligence, captaining corporate industries, like McClellan with his army before Washington, are ever greedy for the enlargement of the thing they control, but more and more showing to the people their inability to move their colossal machine to any degree of harmony or public advantage. Labor unions founded on the principle of general brotherhood, have likewise become like the ambition of McClellan, always crying for more guns, more munitions, more rations, and better equipment but turning them to no constructive account. Between these two great groups, highly organized, glowering upon each other with growing apprehension, are the Great Plain People who are hardly considered in the problem.

What would Lincoln say to this state of affairs, were he to return to contemplate it? Would not his wisdom and universal sympathy for all men prompt him to appeal once more for patience and meditation? Would he not proclaim again his belief in the people, his scorn of class consciousness? Would he not plead with men to lift their eyes above material possessions, to draw inspiration from the sun that shines and the rains that fall alike on rich and poor, cultured and ignorant? Would he not point to the past and cite the evidence of history to prove that all men are free until they enslave themselves in an attempt to enslave others? Would he not show how sympathy and understanding among men result in peace and plenty, while bigotry and pride result in war and destruction?

Lincoln, above and beyond all men, would teach these contending forces that the joy of life is in giving, the enthusiasm of life is in serving, and the highest glory which can be reached by man is the attainment of absolute self-abnegation; until at last he shall be lifted to that lofty tableland of



universal brotherhood where buying and selling, work and wages, shall have been converted into the Divine Sacraments of human fellowship, where men shall not be enemies, but brothers—where class consciousness shall disappear, and the universal hymn of humanity shall be, “with malice toward none and charity for all!”

Lincoln demanded of government what he demanded of himself, first and last, that it should be true to itself. He wore the robe of state so easily that critics thought him careless of his high office. The reverse was true. He was so in harmony with it, that he recognized its nature beyond and above any convention, and hid himself in the heart of it. He sought for the highest, the most perfect ideal of government, and to that ideal he gave absolute loyalty. The ideals of Union were those set out in the Declaration of Independence and adopted in the Constitution. From those ideals he suffered no appeal unless it should be to that higher universal and eternal truth inherent in the universe itself; nor did he rest in the degree of perfection attained, but strove for perfection itself. He smiled at the anxieties of narrow minds over material possessions, knowing the ephemeral character of such things compared with the permanency of the possessions of mind and soul. Selfishness, greed, lust for gain, were strangers to him. A government in which such passions should play a part was government not of freedom but of tyranny, enslaving the ruler as well as the ruled.

Contemplating the journey made with Lincoln from his native cabin in the Kentucky woods to his final taking off in the hour of what will always seem to the clouded eyes of humanity as the hour of the country's greatest need of him, reviewing that journey so filled with world achievements and pregnant with world problems, one stands with bowed head

and hushed breath before the supreme modesty and simplicity of the man, as unobtrusive as the mountains or the sea, as natural as the sun or the procession of the planets. It is his great simplicity, his loyalty to ideals, his fidelity to truth at every point of his career, that makes him today, and will make him always, the inspiration for the democracy of manhood, and that stamp him the leaven in the loaf of human life that will finally leaven the whole. Before him creeds, race prejudices, narrowing conventions and caste selfishness are shamed out of existence and the realities appear.

Pilate questioned Jesus: "What is truth?" His answer was silence. But not so on a more fitting occasion when the Son of the Carpenter of Nazareth declared, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." And again he said, "It is the truth that makes men free."

This has been the proclamation of every universal soul who has demonstrated his utterance by his life,—Moses, Isaiah, Socrates, Epictetus, Buddha, Confucius, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Whitman—put them all before Pilate and let him question them, as he did Jesus of Nazareth, and their answers will be silence. But to those who understand they will say, "I am the Truth," with the qualifying addition of Lincoln's humbleness, "As God gives me to see the Truth." All these great souls have been equally emphatic in the declaration that it is truth, loved and lived and clung to through evil and good report, in success and defeat, in blazing sunlight or darkest gloom, that makes men free. The lives of these men illuminate the absorbing reality that to know the truth is to know that all men are equal in the sight of God.

Lincoln stands with this limited group of the world's great Truth Tellers, men whose characters glow with love,—A UNIVERSAL MAN.

#### FAULTS ESCAPED

Page 9, line 1, 'a sin' to *as in*

Page 107, line 27, 'though' to *thought*

Page 107, next to last line, omit *or making any taking any receipts*

Page 125, line 15, omit fifth word, *state*

Page 162, line 14, first word should read *pleased*















